

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1891.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A LITTLE DINNER FOR THREE.

TWO or three days passed quietly away without any particular incident that need be recorded here. Captain Ducie was much with the Van Loals. Each day they went on an excursion together, and on these occasions the Captain always acted the part of charioteer. As they were driving back into St. Helier one afternoon, said Ducie :

"I have ventured to order a dinner for three in my rooms for this evening. May I hope that you and Miss Van Loal will honour me with your company?"

"We will accept your invitation with pleasure," said the old man, "on condition that you dine with us to-morrow in return."

"A condition that I shall be happy to comply with," answered Ducie. "I have something of a very rare and curious nature to show you after dinner: something respecting which I wish you to favour me with your opinion."

"You may command my humble services in any way," answered Van Loal.

At seven to the minute Mr. Van Loal, his daughter and Captain Ducie sat down to a well-served dinner in the sitting-room of the latter. Mirpah looked very lovely, but paler than ordinary. She seemed anxious and distrait, Ducie thought, and was more than usually silent during the progress of the meal. In the delicate curves of her mouth Ducie fancied that he detected a lurking sadness. He felt that he would have given much to fathom the cause of her unwonted melancholy. What if this incipient sadness were merely a symptom of dawning love? What if she were learning to regard him with some small portion of the same feeling that he had for her? Hope whispered faintly in his ear that such might possibly be the case; but he was not essentially a vain man, and, with an impatient shrug, he dismissed the seductive whisper, and turned his attention

to other things. On one point his mind was quite made up. The very next opportunity that he should have of being alone with Mr. Van Loal he would ask that gentleman's permission to put a certain question to his daughter; and if anything might be augured from a man's manner, his request would meet with no unkind reception. The opportunity he sought would hardly be afforded him this evening. Captain Ducie's sitting-room would, on this occasion, have to fill the offices both of dining and drawing-room. There would be no occasion for Miss Van Loal to retire after the cloth should be drawn. The gentlemen might smoke their cigars on the balcony. What Captain Ducie had to say to Mr. Van Loal would very well keep till morning. He had something particular to say to Mr. Van Loal this evening, but it was something that did not preclude the presence of Mirpah. When the time drew near that he had fixed on in his own mind as the proper time for introducing this one special topic—about half-an-hour after the withdrawal of the cloth—he hardly knew in what terms to begin. He could think of no periphrastical opening by means of which he could introduce the all-important topic. In sheer despair of any readier mode, he at length plunged boldly into the breach.

"I have been informed, Mr. Van Loal, that you are a diamond merchant," he said, "and that you have a wide knowledge of gems of various kinds, and can consequently form a trustworthy opinion as to the value of any that may be submitted for your inspection."

"Well—yes," said Van Loal, with a slow, dubious smile, "I am, or rather was, a dealer in diamonds, howsoever you may have ascertained that fact."

"It was I who told Captain Ducie, papa," said Mirpah in her quiet, clear tones.

"Quite right, my love. I am not ashamed of my profession," answered the old man. Then, turning to Ducie, he said: "Any information that I may be in possession of on the various subjects embraced by my experience I shall be most happy to afford you."

"My object in introducing the topic is to ask you to do me the favour to appraise a certain diamond which I have in my possession: to let me have your opinion as to its qualities, good or bad, together with an estimate of its probable value."

Mr. Van Loal whistled under his breath. "Diamonds are very difficult things to appraise with any degree of correctness, especially where there is any particular feature about them, either in size, colour, water, or cutting, that separates them from the ordinary category of such things. Is the diamond to which you refer an ordinary one? or has it any special features of its own?"

"It has several special features, such as its size, its colour, and its extraordinary brilliance. But I will fetch it, and you shall examine it for yourself. Pardon my leaving you for one moment."

With a smile and a bow, Captain Ducie rose from his chair,

crossed the floor, and disappeared within an inner room. Mr. Van Loal and his daughter exchanged glances full of meaning. The pallor deepened on Mirpah's cheek: she toyed nervously with her fan; and even the old man, ordinarily so calm and self-contained, looked anxious and brimful of nervous excitement. His fingers wandered frequently to his waistcoat, in one pocket of which there seemed to be some object of whose presence there he needed frequently to assure himself.

Ducie returned after an absence of two minutes. He too seemed to have caught that contagion of nervous excitement which marked the demeanour of his two guests. Was he warned by some subtle instinct that one of the great crises of his life was at hand? Or was he merely a prey to that vulgar fear which all who practise the art of illegal conveyancing must or ought to feel when the proceeds of their nefarious deeds are submitted for the first time to the common light of day?

"This is the gem which I am desirous of submitting to your inspection."

He held out his right hand, and there on his open palm the Great Hara Diamond sparkled and glowed, a chrysolite of pure green fire. An exclamation of surprise and delight burst simultaneously from the lips of Mirpah and her father.

"In the whole course of my experience I have never seen anything to equal this," said Van Loal, as he donned his spectacles. "May I take it into my own fingers to examine?"

"Certainly; I have brought it in order that you may do so."

Speaking thus, Captian Ducie dropped the Diamond into the extended palm of the supposed dealer. Some inward qualm next moment made him half put out his hand as if he would have reclaimed the Diamond there and then. But the lean fingers of Van Loal had already closed over the gem, and Ducie's arm dropped aimlessly by his side.

Mr. Van Loal rose from his seat and went close up to the lamp that he might examine the stone more minutely. There he was joined by Mirpah, whose curiosity quite equalled that of her father. They both stood gazing at it for full two minutes without speaking.

"Wonderful! Magnificent!" exclaimed Mr. Van Loal at length. "Words fail to express the admiration I feel at sight of so rare a gem. Can it be possible, Captain Ducie, that you are the fortunate possessor of such a treasure? I should think myself one of the most favoured of mortals did such a Diamond belong to me."

"It is mine," answered Ducie, calmly and deliberately. "It has been in the possession of our family for two centuries. Originally it came from the Indies, and it is said to have been worn by the great Aurungzebe himself."

"If he never did wear it, he ought to have done so. Even

among his remarkable treasures he can have possessed but few stones equal to this one. You can never be called a poor man, Captain Ducie, while you retain this in your possession. Mirpah, my child, what say you?"

"What can I say, papa? I am not enthusiastic, as you know, nor given to indulging in notes of admiration. I can only say that in my poor experience I have never seen anything to equal it. Diamonds as large, or larger, I have seen several times, but they were all white, or of inferior water. I have never seen a green one at all comparable to this one either for size or brilliancy, and I think, papa, that even your wider experience will, in this respect, tally with mine."

"Completely so," answered the old man. "I question whether, among all the crown jewels of Europe, there is a green diamond that can in any way match it, either for colour or brilliancy. Captain Ducie, your treasure is almost unique."

"Can you furnish me with anything like an estimate of its probable value?"

"I am doubtful whether I can. Were it an ordinary white diamond the value could be easily calculated when once the weight was known. But with a green diamond the case is very different. In addition to what its value would be as an ordinary diamond, it would command an extra or fancy price in the market, from the rarity of its colour in conjunction with its size. The additional value is a most difficult thing to gauge accurately. Even among professional dealers you would hardly find two who would name the same figure, or the same figure within a very wide margin, if called upon to estimate the worth of your green diamond."

"Still," said Ducie, "I should like you to furnish me with some approximate estimate of its probable value."

"What is its weight?"

"Nearly eighty-five carats."

"In that case you may estimate its value somewhere between one hundred and forty and two hundred thousand pounds."

The Diamond had been passed on by Mr. Van Loal to his daughter for examination.

"A gem fit for an empress to wear!" was Mirpah's remark as she handed the stone back to her father.

"Observe the mode in which this Diamond is cut," said Van Loal. "It has been done in the Indies after a style which has been handed down from father to son for a thousand years. You should let it be operated upon by our Amsterdam cutters. They would turn it out at the end of six months, less in size it is true, but so greatly improved in every other respect, that you would hardly know it for the same gem. May I ask whether it is your intention to dispose of it by private treaty?"

"It is my intention ultimately so to do," answered Ducie.

"I suppose you have no objection to my trying the temper of your Diamond on the window?"

"None whatever," said Ducie, with a shrug. "You may write your name on every pane in the hotel if you please."

"That would indeed be a painful exhibition of vanity," replied Van Loal, with a weak attempt at a pun.

Speaking thus, he rose from his seat, and crossed the floor, holding the Diamond between the thumb and finger of his right hand.

Curtains of crimson damask draped the windows. One of these curtains Van Loal drew noisily aside. A second or two later those in the room could hear the slow scratching of the Diamond on the glass.

Mirpah's cheek grew still paler as the sound met her ears.

Just then Ducie was thinking as much of the beautiful girl before him as of the Diamond.

"I hope you have not forgotten our engagement to visit Elizabeth Castle to-morrow," he said. "It will be low water at noon, and we can either walk across the sands to it or ride, as may seem best to you."

"I have not forgotten," said Mirpah, softly, and from her eyes there shot a swift, half-sorrowful glance that thrilled him to the heart.

"I must make my opportunity to-morrow and propose to her," he said to himself. "I never thought to love again, but I love Mirpah Van Loal, and will make her my wife if she will let me do so. Perhaps the future may have a quiet happiness in store for me, such as I never dreamed of in all the wild days that have come and gone since my father turned me out of doors, and I first thought myself a man. I begin to think there is something in life that I have altogether missed."

This thought was working in his mind when Mr. Van Loal came back from the window, still holding the Diamond between the thumb and finger of his right hand. He deposited it lightly in Ducie's palm.

"A wonderful gem, my dear sir—a truly wonderful gem!" said the old man. "I envy you the possession of such a treasure. In all my experience I have never seen or heard of its equal. But you must allow me to say that I think it very unwise on your part to carry so valuable an item of property about with you on your travels. Let me recommend you to deposit it with your banker, or in some other safe custody, as soon as ever you get back to England; unless, indeed, you may wish to dispose of it, in which case allow me to offer my humble services as negotiator of the transaction for you."

"No one on the island, save yourself and Miss Van Loal, is aware that I carry such an article about with me; consequently there is no fear of its being stolen. As it happens, I *am* desirous of disposing

of the Diamond—in fact, I should have sold it some time ago had I known how to conduct such a transaction without running the risk of being egregiously duped. Your kind offer of your valuable services has disposed of that difficulty, and, with your permission, we will discuss the matter in extenso to-morrow.”

He had risen while speaking, and he now went away into the inner room, carrying the Diamond with him. As soon as his back was turned a quick, meaning glance passed between father and daughter. There was a look of triumph in the eyes of Van Loal which told Mirpah that the object which had brought them all the way from their Midlandshire home had been successfully achieved.

No word passed between the two, and Ducie came back in less than a minute. Conversation was resumed, and still the theme was diamonds and rare gems. As was only to be expected from one who called himself a dealer in such merchandise, Mr. Van Loal showed himself to be deeply versed in all matters relating to precious stones. Captain Ducie was greatly interested. The little company did not break up till a late hour.

“At noon to-morrow. You will not forget?” said Ducie, as he held Mirpah’s hand for a moment at the door of his room. She made him no answer in words, but again that strange half-sorrowful look shot from her eyes to his, and her soft hand clasped his in a way that it had never been betrayed into doing before. Then they parted. Captain Ducie’s dreams that night were happy dreams.

Mirpah Van Loal must either have forgotten her overnight promise to Captain Ducie, or have held it in small regard, seeing that she left St. Helier by the Southampton boat at six forty-five the next morning. She was accompanied by her father, and by a clean-shaven young gentleman, dressed in black, who had been living a very secluded life for some time past at Button’s Hotel.

As the boat steamed slowly out of the harbour, Mirpah threw a last searching glance among the crowd with which the pier was lined. “Poor Captain Ducie!” she murmured half aloud. Her father, who happened to be standing close by, peered up curiously into her face and saw that her eyes were wet. He did not speak, but moved further away, and left her to her own thoughts.

They had an excellent passage and Mirpah bore up bravely. Some time after leaving Guernsey, an English steamer bound for the Islands passed them a few hundred yards to leeward. The clean-shaven young gentleman in black was watching the stranger keenly through his glass when an expression of surprise burst from his lips. “What is it, James? What is it that you see, my boy?” asked Mr. Van Loal.

“On yonder boat I see an old acquaintance of yours and mine.”

The old man took the glass and scanned the passing ship, the passengers of which were scanning the Southampton boat eagerly in

return, and had their faces turned full towards it. The old man laid down the glass after a minute's silent observation.

"James," he said in a solemn tone, "unless my eyes deceive me greatly, the mulatto Cleon is on board yonder ship."

"You are right, father. Cleon *is* on board that ship. He was not killed, then, after all, in his encounter with Captain Ducie."

"Such a fellow as that takes a deal of killing. On one point we may be pretty sure : that by some means or other he has discovered Captain Ducie's whereabouts and is now on his track."

"Wants his revenge, perhaps."

"Wants to recover the Hara Diamond, mayhap."

Madgin Junior laughed. "He will hardly succeed in doing that, father. Mr. Van Loal has been in the field before him."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CLEON REDIVIVUS.

WHEN Madgin Junior averred that he saw Cleon, the mulatto servant of the late M. Platzoff, on board the steamer which would be due in Guernsey some two hours later, he stated no more than the truth. That dusky individual was there, looking as well as ever he had looked in his life ; sprucely, even elegantly dressed ; and having a watchful eye on his two small articles of luggage : a miniature portmanteau, and a tiny black leather bag. At Guernsey he quitted the steamer, and waiting on the pier till he saw it fairly under way again for the sister island, he entered at once into negotiations with some of the hardy boatmen generally to be found lounging about St. Peter's port. The result was that a pretty little skiff was brought round, into which Mr. Cleon and his luggage were carefully stowed, the whole being taken charge of by a couple of sailors who at once hoisted their sail and stood out in a straight line for Jersey. The wind was in their favour, but the tide was against them nearly the whole way, and it was quite dark before they got under the lee of the lighthouse and found themselves safely sheltered in the little harbour of St. Helier. It is quite possible that Mr. Cleon may have had some motive in not wishing to land by daylight ; at all events he seemed in nowise dissatisfied by his late arrival, but paid his boatmen liberally and dismissed them.

Skirting the head of the harbour cautiously, with his coat collar turned up and his hat well slouched over his eyes, Cleon entered the first low public-house to which he came and called for a glass of rum. A number of men, sailors chiefly, and loafers of various kinds, passed in and out while he stood at the bar, at each one of whom he glanced keenly. He waited nearly half an hour before he found the sort of face he wanted—one in which low cunning and intelligence were combined. He took the owner of this face aside and

held a private parley with him for full ten minutes. Then the man went away and Mr. Cleon ordered a private room and some tea.

He was still discussing his chop when the man got back.

"Well—what news? Make your report," said the mulatto.

"All right, Captain," with a touch of his forelock. "Found out all you wanted to know, right slick away. Make you no error on that point. I promised to do it, and I done it. Oh, yes. There's no lies about what I'm going to tell you. Captain Ducie is stopping at the 'Royal George,' and has been stopping there for the last ten days. Up to last night most of his time was spent with an old gentleman and a young lady, father and daughter, of the name of Van Loal. But they went away by this morning's boat, and Captain Ducie has been mooning about all day, seeming as if he hardly knew what to do with himself. Just now he is up the town at one of the billiard-saloons, and is not expected home before eleven."

"You know all the billiard-rooms in the town. Go and find out at which one of them Captain Ducie is engaged, and whether he is so fixed that he is likely to remain there for some time to come."

In less than a quarter of an hour the man was back. "The Captain is playing pool with a lot more swells at Baxter's rooms, and seems well fixed for another hour to come."

The mulatto had already paid his bill, and was ready for a start. "Now show me the 'Royal George' Hotel," said he.

The hotel was pointed out and the man paid and dismissed. Cleon entered the hotel with the air of a proprietor, and asked to be shown a private sitting-room. He was shown into one on the first floor. It was small but comfortable. He expressed himself as being perfectly satisfied with it, and then he ordered dinner.

While the meal was being got ready, Mr. Cleon stated that he should like to see such bedrooms as were disengaged. He was rather fastidious, he added, in the choice of a bedroom, and should prefer making his own selection. He was very pleasant and jocular with the chambermaid who showed him round.

In all there were five bedrooms in want of occupants, and Mr. Cleon was not satisfied till he had looked into each of them. "Come, now," he said, after peeping into the fifth and last, "if I am rightly informed, you have a military gentleman stopping in the house, a Captain ——"

"Ducie," added the girl, as the mulatto stopped, as if in doubt.

"Ah, that is the name. Captain Ducie. Now, soldiers generally know how to pick out the best quarters, and if I were to choose a bedroom on the same floor as the Captain's I could hardly go far astray! Now, I dare say, you could tell me the number of Captain Ducie's room?"

"The Captain's room is number fourteen. Number ten, the next room but three to it, is empty, and you can have it if you choose."

"I engage number ten on the spot," said Mr. Cleon, emphatically.

"See that the sheets are properly aired, and here are a couple of half-crowns for your trouble."

Mr. Cleon ate his dinner in solitary state, and retired to his bedroom at an early hour. To his bedroom, but not to bed. After about five minutes his candle was put out. A minute or two later the door of his room was noiselessly opened, and showed him standing on the threshold, tall and black, like a spirit of evil in the dim starlight. After listening intently for a little while, he stole gently along the corridor from his own room to the door of number fourteen. This door he tried, and found that it yielded at once to his hand. He opened it a little way and peeped in. The room was dark and empty. Still listening, with every sense on the alert, he struck a noiseless match. The tiny flame, bright and clear, and lasting for about half a minute, was sufficient to enable him to photograph on his memory the position of every article of furniture in the room. It was also sufficient to enable him to note something of much greater importance: that there was not only a stout lock on the door of number fourteen, but that the door could be still further secured on the inside by means of a strong bolt. He smothered the malediction that rose to his lips when he saw this, and then he stole back to his own room, with the look of a baffled wild beast on his face.

Even now he did not go to bed, but sat waiting in the dark, with his door slightly ajar, for the coming of the tenant of number fourteen. Upwards of an hour passed away before he heard Captain Ducie's step on the stair. He seemed to draw back within himself as he heard it: to crouch, as if getting ready for a spring. But the moment Captain Ducie entered number fourteen, Cleon was at the door of his own room and listening. He fell back a pace or two, and shook his fist savagely in the air as he heard what he had felt almost sure he should hear. He heard Captain Ducie double-lock the door of number fourteen, and then shoot home the brass bolt, as though still further to secure himself against intruders. The mulatto's sharp, white teeth clashed together viciously as the sound met his ear.

"Only wait!" he whispered down the dark corridor. Then he went in, and shut and locked the door of his own room.

Next morning he ordered breakfast to be taken up to bed to him. He was very unwell, he said, and should not be able to leave his room all that day. But his illness, whatever it might be, did not seem to affect his appetite. Luncheon, and afterwards dinner, were sent up to him in due course. At nine o'clock he rang his bell and ordered a bottle of claret. At the same time he instructed the waiter that he should not want anything more till morning, and that he must on no account be disturbed till that time.

He had been singularly uneasy and watchful all day, listening frequently, with his door slightly ajar, to the downstairs noises of the

hotel, sometimes even venturing a few yards down the corridor when the house was more than usually quiet, but retreating quickly to his den at the slightest sound of an approaching footstep. Once he had even penetrated into Captain Ducie's room for a few seconds. "Ah, scélérat! I shall have you yet," he muttered, as he shut himself out of the room after his brief survey.

Now that daylight had faded into dusk, and dusk had deepened into night, his proceedings were still more singular. After finishing his bottle of wine, he proceeded to take off his ordinary outer clothing, and in place of it to induct himself into a tight-fitting suit of some strong dark woven stuff that fitted him like a glove. Round his waist he buckled a belt of dull black leather, and into this belt he stuck a small sheathed dagger. Pendent from the belt was a tiny pouch made of the same material, into which he put some half dozen allumettes, and two small cones of some red material, each of them about four inches in height. This done, his toilette was finished. After a last glance round, he put out the candles, opened the door, and halted on the threshold for a moment or two to listen.

The night was clear and unclouded, and through the staircase window the stars shone brightly in. The corridor was filled with their ghostly light. Midway in it stood the mulatto, black from head to foot, except for his two ferocious eyes that gleamed redly from under his heavy brows like danger signals pointing out the road to death. A pause of a few seconds and then he shut and locked the door of his room—locked it from the outside and put away the key in the tiny pouch by his side.

The quiet starlight seemed to fall away from him affrighted as he moved down the dusky corridor. Now that the door was shut behind him he went on without hesitation or pause. He had only a few paces to go. On reaching the door of number fourteen he turned the handle, went in, and closed the door softly behind him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PASTILLE-BURNING.

RARELY had Captain Ducie felt in a pleasanter frame of mind than when he went down to breakfast in the course of the forenoon following the evening on which he had shown Mr. Van Loal and his daughter the Hara Diamond. Several circumstances had combined to render him more than ordinarily cheerful. He had fully made up his mind to propose to Mirpah Van Loal that very day, and he felt little fear that his suit would be rejected. Once married, he would cut his old associations for ever, would probably leave England for several years, and in some remote spot would, with his lovely wife, lead a life such as one sometimes reads of in idyls and romances but

rarely sees reduced to practice in this work-a-day world. Mr. Van Loal had appraised the Diamond at a very tolerable sum, and through his influence he would doubtless be able to dispose of it quietly, and in a way that would give rise to no suspicion as to the mode by which it had come into his possession. The proceeds of the sale, judiciously invested, would be productive of an annual income on which it would be possible to live in comfort wherever he might choose to pitch his tent. Lastly, all apprehension as to any results which might possibly have accrued to him from the sudden death of M. Platzoff, and the subsequent events at Bon Repos, had utterly died away. He had got by this time to feel as if the Diamond were as much his own as though it had been given to him or handed down to him as a family heirloom. If any uncomfortable thought connected with the death of Platzoff and his appropriation of the Diamond ever crossed his mind, it was dismissed with ignominy, like a poor relation, almost as soon as it made itself known. Captain Ducie was not a man to let his conscience trouble him whenever it wished to question him respecting any transaction the results of which had proved prosperous to himself. In such cases he bade it begone, turning it out by main force, and shutting the door in its face. But whenever it stole in and began to reproach him for his conduct in any little affair that in its results had proved disastrous, either socially or pecuniarily, then did Edmund Ducie bow his head in all humility before the veiled monitress, and cry *mea culpa*, and bewail his naughtiness with many inward groans, and promise to amend his ways in time to come. But it may be doubted whether in the latter case his regret did not arise less from having done that which was wrong, than because the wrong had proved unsuccessful in compassing the ends for which it was done.

Be that as it may, Captain Ducie's conscience did not seem to trouble him much as he came downstairs this pleasant autumn morning, humming an air from the "*Trovatore*," and giving the last finishing touches to his filbert-shaped nails. He rang the bell for breakfast, and turned over, half-contemptuously, the selection of newspapers on the side table.

"Has Mr. Van Loal come down to breakfast yet, do you know?" he asked when the waiter re-entered the room.

"I will ascertain, sir, and let you know."

Two minutes later the waiter came back. "Mr. Van Loal, sir, and Miss Van Loal, left this morning by the Southampton boat."

"What!" shouted Ducie, jumping to his feet as though he had been shot.

The waiter repeated his statement.

"Either you are crazy or you have been misinformed," said Ducie, contemptuously, as he quietly resumed his seat. "Go again, and ascertain the truth this time."

Presently the waiter returned. "What I told you before, sir, is

quite true. Mr. Van Loal and his daughter left this morning by the early boat."

A horrible sickening dread took possession of Ducie. He staggered to his feet, his face like that of a corpse. Was it—was it possible that by some devil's trick the Diamond had been conjured from him? His hand went instinctively to the spot where he knew it ought to be. No—it was not gone. He could feel it there, just below his heart, in the little sealskin bag that hung from his neck by a steel chain. He had replaced it there after taking it from the fingers of Van Loal the preceding night, and he had not looked at it since.

Greatly relieved, he turned to the waiter with a face that was still strangely white and contorted. "What you have just told me is almost incredible," he said. "In fact, I cannot believe it without further proof. Go and bring to me someone who was an eye-witness of the departure of Mr. and Miss Van Loal."

The waiter went. Ducie was still unnerved, and he poured himself out a cup of coffee with a hand that trembled in spite of all his efforts to keep it still. But his appetite for breakfast was utterly gone.

Then the waiter came back and ushered into the room, first the young lady who kept the accounts of the establishment; secondly, the boots. The young lady advanced with charming self-possession, made her little curtsy, and broke the ice at once.

"I am informed, sir, that you wish to have some particulars respecting the departure of Mr. and Miss Van Loal," she said. "They dined with you last evening in your own room, if I am not mistaken. Yes. Well, sir, about eleven o'clock, just as I was closing my books for the night, I was surprised by a visit from Mr. Van Loal. 'Oblige me by making out my little account,' said he; 'and include in it to-morrow's breakfast. I am recalled to England by important letters, and must go by the first boat. You will further oblige me by making no mention of my departure till after I am gone. I have several friends to whom I ought to say good-bye, but I do not feel equal to the occasion, and wish to slip quietly away without saying a word.' Mr. Van Loal waited while I made out the account. Then he paid me and bade me good-night. When I got up this morning, I found that he and his daughter had gone by the early boat. James, here, took their luggage down to the pier and saw them start."

"Did you with your own eyes see Mr. and Miss Van Loal start by the Southampton boat this morning?"

"I did, sir. I was instructed to look after their luggage this morning. I took it down to the boat and saw the old gentleman and the young lady safe aboard. They went below deck at once, and two minutes later the steamer was off."

"A very clear and conclusive narrative," said Ducie. "You are the man, I believe, who looks after the letters and attends to the post bag?"

"I am, sir."

"Were there any letters by the afternoon post yesterday for Mr. Van Loal?"

"No, sir, not one. I can speak positively to that."

Left alone, Captain Ducie sat down in a perfect maze of perplexity. That Van Loal and his daughter were gone he could no longer doubt. But why had they gone without a hint or word of farewell? They must have known at the time they were dining with him the previous evening that they were about to sail on the following morning, and yet they allowed him to plan and arrange for the day's excursion as though any thought of change were the last thing in their minds. And Mirpah, too—what of her? What of the woman whom it was his intention to have proposed to that very day? Had she merely been playing with him all along in order that she might jilt him at last? He could not understand the thing at all. He was mazed, utterly dumbfounded, like a man walking in a dream. The more he thought of the affair, the less comprehensible it seemed to him. His amour propre was terribly wounded. More intolerable than all else was the sense there was upon him of having been outwitted, of having in some mysterious way been made the victim of a plot with the beginning and ending of which he was utterly unacquainted. He had been hoodwinked—bamboozled—he felt sure of it; but how and for what purpose he was quite at a loss to fathom. His Diamond was perfectly safe; he had never gambled with Van Loal; whatever his looks might have conveyed, he had never spoken a word of love to Mirpah, so that it was impossible she could have taken offence with him on that score. What, then, was the meaning of it all? He rang the bell to inquire whether Mr. Van Loal had left no note or message of any kind for him. None whatever, was the reply.

"What a preposterous idiot I must have been," murmured Ducie, "to fancy that this woman, whom I proposed to make my wife, cared for me the least bit in the world! She is like the rest of her sex—neither better nor worse. From highest to lowest they are false and fickle—every one."

He spent a miserable day, wandering aimlessly about; he neither knew nor cared whither; nursing his wounds, and vainly striving to understand for what reason he had been struck so mercilessly and in the dark. A thousand times that day he cursed the name of Mirpah Van Loal. Once he paused in his paces of the lonely sands, and, not satisfied with the evidence of his fingers that the Diamond was safe in its sealskin pocket, he took it out of its hiding-place and gazed on it, and pressed it to his lips, even as M. Paul Platzoff had done in his time, and as, in all probability, hundreds had done before him.

"Fool! after all my experience of life and the world, to believe in the chimera of woman's love!" he said bitterly to himself. "Man's

only real friend in this world is money, or that which can command money. The rest is only a shadow on the wall, gone ere it can be clutched."

He had been wandering about all day without food, and when night set in he felt nervous and dispirited.

He made a pretence of eating his dinner as usual, but he sickened at his food and sought consolation in a double allowance of wine. Later on he strolled out with a cigar, and made his way to a certain billiard-room where he was not unknown. He was too nervous to touch a cue himself, but he found his excitement in betting on other men's play. After having lost five sovereigns, he went back to his hotel. This was the night of Cleon's arrival at Jersey.

His mood next day was one of sullen bitterness. It was a mood that, under other circumstances, might have incited him to do something desperate, were it only to find a safety-valve for his pent-up feelings. In such a mood, had he been on active service, and had the need arisen, he would have gloried in offering himself as the leader of some forlorn hope. In such a mood, had he been a burglar, it would have fared ill with anyone who stood up in defence of that which he had made up his mind to take as his own. Happily, or unhappily, in such crises of everyday life we have no choice save to eat our own hearts, and drink our own tears, and wear the mask of comedy to the world, while hiding that other mask of tragedy under our robe, which we venture to don only when we are in secret and alone.

Captain Ducie, behind the mask of comedy which he presented to the world, hid a heart that in a few short hours had become surcharged with gall, and that would never again, however long his life might be, be entirely free from bitterness. He felt like one of those savage caged creatures who, when they have nothing else to war against, will sometimes turn and rend themselves. He felt that he should like to do himself some bodily injury: to put his foot under the car of Juggernaut, had he been a Hindoo; or to have swung, with a hook through his loins, above the populace of some Indian fair.

All day long he loafed about in this savage mood, smoking innumerable cigars and twisting the ends of his moustache viciously.

He was only anxious for one thing, and that was for the arrival of the afternoon post. It is possible that he expected some line of explanation from Van Loal. If so, he was disappointed. That day's post brought him no letters.

After dinner he joined a whist party in the coffee-room. Later on the quartette composing the party adjourned to a private room upstairs. Captain Ducie was ordinarily an abstemious man, especially when cards were on the tapis, but to-night he was reckless and took more wine than was good for him. It was nearly one o'clock when

the party broke up, and Captain Ducie never afterwards remembered how he reached his own room.

That he reached his room in safety cannot be doubted, because he found himself safely in bed when he awoke next morning. But before that time arrived a strange scene had been enacted in Captain Ducie's bedroom.

As before stated, it was nearly one o'clock when he reached his room, and five minutes after getting into bed he had fallen into a broken troubled sleep in which he enacted over again the varied incidents of the evening's play. After moaning and tossing about for more than an hour, he woke up, feeling parched from head to foot and with a pain across his forehead like a fiery hoop that seemed to be slowly shrivelling up his brain. He got out of bed and emptied the decanter on his dressing-table at a draught. Then he plunged his head into a large basin of water, and that revived him still more. His head still ached, but not so violently as before. He went back to bed, cursing his folly for having taken so much wine. The night-light was burning as usual—dim and ghostly; barely sufficient to light up the familiar features of the room—for Captain Ducie had a strange superstitious horror of sleeping in the dark. He lay on his back, with his hands clasped above his head and with shut eyes. Sleep did not come back to him at once. His imagination went wandering here and there into odd nooks and corners that it had not visited for years. By-and-by he slid into a state of semi-unconsciousness, in which, without entirely losing all knowledge of time and place—of the fact that he was now lying there in bed with a beastly headache—he yet mixed up certain scenes and events from dreamland, interfusing the real and the imaginary in such a way that for the time being the line of demarcation between the two was utterly lost, and where one ended and the other began he would just then have found it impossible to determine. He was playing cards with one of the huge stone images that guarded the gates of Memphis, and was yet at the same time conscious of being in bed. He could see the grotesque shadows thrown by the night-light on the wall, and he could hear the ticking of his watch in the little pocket a few inches above his head. In his game with the stone image, in whose eyes he seemed to read the garnered patience of many centuries, he was aware that unless he could succeed in trumping his adversary's trick with the five of clubs the game would be irrevocably lost, and he, Ducie, would be condemned to be buried alive for five hundred years in the heart of the great Pyramid. The twentieth deal would be the last, and, if the five of clubs were not forthcoming by that time, the game would be lost and the dread sentence would be carried into effect.

Deal after deal went on, and still the five of clubs did not show itself. Even in the midst of his perturbation he heard and counted the strokes of a clock in the silent house. The clock struck three,

and in the act of deliberating which card he should play next, Ducie remarked to himself that it still wanted two hours to daybreak.

From minute to minute his perturbation increased. He did his best to maintain a calm front before his calm adversary. As he peered into those terrible eyes, he knew that he must expect no mercy if he failed in producing the magic card. Forgiveness and revenge were alike unknown to the inexorable being before him, who was the embodiment of law, serene and passionless, neither to be hurried nor hindered, keeping ever to the simple white line traced out for his footsteps from the beginning of the world, and as utterly regardless of human joy or human sorrow as of the grumbling of the earthquake or the fiery passion of the volcano.

Slowly but surely the game went on. Ducie's adversary marked off every deal with a hieroglyph on the huge slate by his side. Fifteen—ten—five—the number of deals diminished one by one, and still the magic card was not forthcoming. Ducie went on playing with the quiet courage of despair. Five—four—three—two—one. The last deal had come, but the five of clubs was still hidden in the pack. As he thought of the terrible fate before him his soul was utterly dismayed. Suddenly he heard a faint whisper in his ear: "Give me the Hara Diamond and I will save you." "It is yours," he replied in the same tone. In a fainter whisper than before came the words: "Feel up your sleeve for the five of clubs."

Ducie put his hand up his sleeve and drew forth the magic card. As he dashed it on the table, cards and image melted silently away, all but the great calm eyes, which seemed to recede slowly from him while gazing at him with an inexorable gentleness that awed him, and crushed out of him all expressions of joy at his escape.

He had been conscious all this time of being in his own room at the "Royal George," and, without being thoroughly awake, this consciousness was still upon him when he found himself alone. Was he really quite alone? he asked himself. Some voice had whispered in his ear only a minute ago, and a voice implied a bodily presence. But whose presence?

He would doubtless know before long, when this unknown being would come forth to claim the great Diamond.

Well, better part from the Diamond than be made a living mummy of, and be buried for five hundred years among dead kings and priests in the great Pyramid.

Was it Shakespeare who talked about "dusty death?" It did not matter. He had been saved from a dreadful fate, and a long peaceful sleep for one hundred and five hours, fifteen minutes, and ten seconds—neither more nor less—was needed to compensate him for the mental and bodily torture from which he had just escaped.

Even while this fancy was simmering in his brain, he was aware of a strange, subtle odour which seemed to rise from the floor in faint, cloud-like waves, rising and spreading till every nook and cranny of

the room was pervaded by it. It was a mist of perfume—a perfume far from unpleasant to inhale—heavy, yet pungent, odorous of the East, inclining to sleep and to visions of a passionless existence, undisturbed by all outward influences—such visions as must come to the strange beings whose most central thought is that of future absorption in the mystic godhead of the mighty Brahma.

Empires might change and die, the world might split asunder and chaos rule again, it mattered not to him. Only to rest, to lie there for ever, self-absorbed, indifferent to all mundane matters—that was the utmost that he craved.

The mist of perfume thickened, becoming from minute to minute denser and more penetrating. By this time it seemed to have permeated his whole being. It filled his lungs, it mingled with his blood, it saturated his brain; it glowed in him, a slumberous heat, from head to foot. The shadowy past of his life, the real present of his surroundings, grouped themselves in his brain like blurred photographs, which it was impossible for him to regard with anything more than a vague and impersonal interest. Nothing seemed real to him save the noiseless involved working of his own mind, working in and out like a shuttle with a fantastic thread of many colours, and with self for ever as the central figure.

While his mind had been growing thus strangely active, his body had been slowly losing—or rather, suspending—its vitality. Slowly and imperceptibly his limbs had grown utterly powerless and inert, till now, if a kingdom had been offered him, he could not have raised hand or foot two inches from the bed. Not that he had any desire to move hand or foot, or head or tongue; only to lie still for ever, thinking his own thoughts, weighing the universe in the balance of his own mind and finding it wanting. Grant him but that, ye powers of earth and air, and for the rest, the word “*nihil*” might be written, and all things come to an end.

Suddenly, through the mist of perfume that filled the room he saw, or seemed to see, a black and threatening figure rise from the floor close by his bedside.

“Surely,” he thought to himself, “this must be the presence belonging to the voice that whispered in my ear as I was playing cards with the Memphian image. He has come to claim his pledge—he has come for the Hara Diamond.”

To him, just now, the Hara Diamond was as valueless as a grain of sand. That black and threatening figure by his bedside might take it and welcome.

“Strange,” he thought, “that the minds of men should ever grow to such trifles.”

The power of despising others thoroughly, but without emotion, is one of the final products of pure intellect: and to that serene height he had now attained.

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Ducie felt no alarm. Such a human emotion as fear affected him not, nor quickened the equable pulses of his being.

As the face pertaining to the figure bent nearer to his own, he recognised it as the face of Cleon the mulatto. Even then he was not surprised. The mulatto made as though he would have struck Ducie to the heart, but stopped the dagger when it was within an inch of his breast. He passed his other hand across his forehead and seemed to stagger.

Was it possible that the powerful odour was affecting him as it had affected his victim? He hurriedly replaced his dagger in its sheath, and putting his hand to Ducie's neck, as if he knew instinctively that such a thing was there, he felt for the chain from which was suspended the sealskin pouch that held the Diamond. He had no difficulty in finding the chain, nor the sachet, nor the Diamond. He extracted the great flashing gem from its hiding-place, even as Ducie had extracted it a few weeks before from the head of the Indian idol. He held it up between his eye and the night-lamp and muttered a few guttural words to himself.

Then for the second time he passed his hand across his forehead and staggered. As if warned that he had not a moment to spare, he stuffed the Diamond into his mouth, gave a last scowl at the helpless figure before him and disappeared behind the curtains that fell round the head of the bed.

Ducie was left alone.

All that had just taken place had affected him no more than if he had witnessed it as a scene out of a play. The Great Diamond was gone, and not even a ripple disturbed the waveless serenity of his mind.

But the subtle odour that had filled the room was slowly fading out, and as it grew fainter, so did the strange spell that had held Ducie captive begin to lose its power. His thoughts lost their crystalline clearness, becoming blurred and unwieldy. They no longer arranged themselves in proper sequence. Some of them became so cumbersome that they had to be dropped and left behind, while those that were more nimble strayed so far ahead as to be almost beyond recall. Then the nimble ones had to come back and try to pick up the unwieldy ones, till they all became jumbled together and lost their individuality. Finally, sleep came to the rescue and laid her mantle softly over them, and for a little while all was peace.

(To be continued.)

LADY HESTER STANHOPE.

SOME men and women whose names have made a mark on the page of the world's history have stepped out into the light from families and stations and social surroundings from whence we should have the least expected them to come. Others again have been to the manner born, and we have only to look to the race from which they sprang, or the associations amid which they were nurtured, to account for much that we find remarkable in them.

Lady Hester Stanhope was one of the latter; there was both eccentricity and talent in the families of each of her parents. The Stanhopes were a race that had often not done exactly as other men did, or thought exactly as other men thought; and her mother was the daughter of the great Earl of Chatham, the mighty minister who had once held the fate of England in his hand, who had been death-struck with the thunders of his eloquence upon his lips.

When little Hester was about four years old, the greatest misfortune happened to her that can, under God, happen to a girl—she lost her mother. Her father married again in course of time, and married a woman who turned out to be in everything most antagonistic to the strong character and decided nature of his daughter. Hester would submit to no training which emanated from her hated and despised stepmother, so she grew up very much in the way she chose. She had, of course, like all young ladies of rank of that day, to go through a certain amount of drill in the way of back-boards and such-like ponderous school machinery; but her peculiarly precocious mind broke away from all trammels, and she insisted on reading what she pleased, and darted the keen shafts of her young wit full in the faces of horrified governesses, and pastors and masters. It was quite useless to tell her what was and was not proper for the daughter of an earl to do or say: her ladyship was a law unto herself, and a very strong-handed, arbitrary law too.

Thus time went on till Hester had reached womanhood, and seldom had a more richly-developed flower of beauty been seen in the London Society of that day than hers when she began to appear at ball and rout. Her figure might have been a sculptor's ideal dream of a Juno, her lustrous eyes now flashed with intellect, now danced with fun. Her complexion is said to have been one of the loveliest ever beheld in its brilliancy of colouring, in its transparency of skin. No wonder that there were many worshippers and many declared suitors round her; but to not one of them would the divinity bow down a favouring ear.

In the midst of all her triumphs she had a worse and more bitter quarrel with her stepmother than she had ever had before, and

suddenly the star had vanished from the London horizon, and buried itself in the very depths of the country. Her grandmother, Lady Chatham, lived in an old mansion in Somersetshire, and thither she went. With the old lady she was a privileged pet, and she gave her one of the things which Hester Stanhope loved best in the world, and that was her own way in everything.

In Somersetshire Lady Hester remained for about three years, setting the whole quiet country neighbourhood on fire with her wit and beauty, making it ring with tales of her eccentricity, causing herself to be regarded as almost a fabulous being by the simple folk in the midst of whom she dwelt. Her horsemanship took by storm the hearts of the fox-hunting country squires, her toilettes filled with hopeless admiration and envy the breasts of the rustic belles, her free and easy manners struck dumb with bewildered astonishment the worthy dames of Somerset. They had read of earls' daughters to be sure, when now and then they had been lucky enough to get hold of a worn copy of a fashionable novel, to spell over in intervals between preserving and cordial-making; earls' daughters who seemed to be always walking a minuet and sweeping about in long brocaded trains; but here was an earl's daughter who went skipping over the meadows with ankles liberally displayed, who laughed as merrily as a milk-maid, who indulged in practical jokes as if she were a village schoolboy.

At the end of three years, when she was about twenty-eight, Lady Hester Stanhope flashed back again once more into the great world of the metropolis. She was no doubt by this time heartily tired of her life in the old country house, and moreover her uncle, William Pitt, whose favourite niece she had always been, asked her to come and live with him and become the mistress of his home. His household had long needed female supervision, and his drawing-room a lady to receive his guests. Hester was soon established in her uncle's house, and was blazing there as a queen of society.

This period was probably the happiest of Lady Hester Stanhope's life. A real, strong bond of mutual affection subsisted between her and her uncle, she stood at the head of one of the most splendid establishments in London, the world of rank, of literature, of art thronged around her and paid homage at her shrine. She held much power in her hand, for Pitt frequently listened to her advice and suggestions, and even allowed her to give away places and patronage at her will.

We catch glimpses of her standing in the full bloom of her imperial beauty in the brilliantly-lighted, gilded rooms, the centre of a crowd of ladies all aglitter with jewels and glistening silks, and gentlemen with lace ruffles and rapiers at their side; a crowd that treats the great minister's niece with almost royal honours. Her pretty mouth sends flying round her every minute little showers of witty fireworks, her eyes do deadly execution among the men.

She knows that though the women are paying her soft sweet compliments, there is cruel, bitter jealousy lurking in their hearts, and this adds to the zest and piquancy of her ladyship's triumphs. Men of genius are there, and on these the delicately-chiselled lips smile graciously ; and there is a touch of almost reverent tenderness in her manner as she speaks to them, for she knows that these are kings who are forced by the hard pressure of circumstances to come as beggars for patronage : kings that will reign in print long after the titled nobodies around them are forgotten. Pompous folly is there, talking a great deal of grand, inflated nonsense ; and on it those same lips smile contemptuously behind the fan of rare carved ivory. Would-be lovers are there ; and towards these, with a shrug of the white shoulders, is turned quickly and decisively the haughty lady's back. She has still, as in the days of her early girlhood, a feeling of strong rebellion against the ordinary fate of a young woman of quality to marry a man for the sake of sharing his title and his money, and spend a humdrum existence at his side in talking small scandal and airing fashionable costumes.

Lady Hester Stanhope's brain was so keen and so observant, that sometimes it caused her tongue to run away and to make sharper remarks on the follies and foibles of those about her than was exactly warranted by politeness. Thus it came to pass that she made some enemies who, however, in the days of her power, only growled under their breath.

But her royalty was not to be long-lived. When she had reigned in his house for about two years, her uncle, William Pitt, died. Then, in an instant, the Court which surrounded Lady Hester vanished like a many-tinted soap-bubble, and many of those who had cringed before her and flattered her started up and darted serpent tongues of detraction and calumny at her. In the mouths of these, who but yesterday had been hymning her praises, she was a heartless coquette, a woman eaten up by selfish ambition. In real grief at her uncle's loss, in violent disgust at such usage from the world, she turned once more from the gaudy scene of London life, and, leaving far behind her rouge, pearl powder, hoops, diamond buckles, fashionable small-talk, and false friends, retired into Wales, and lived alone for some time amid the grand solitude of the mountains.

From her retreat, however, she emerged at length. She was still very beautiful, though she was past thirty ; hers was a style of beauty which wore well. She was endowed with a peculiarly brilliant conversational gift. The government had conferred on her a life pension of twelve hundred pounds a year, in consideration of her uncle's services to the State, which, joined to her own private fortune, made her rich in those days for a single woman. A natural wish again to shine and to be admired revived in her, and she re-appeared in London.

The great world received her back with plaudits, her enemies had

been dispersed or silenced, and she was re-seated on a social throne. She was, of course, not so courted and bowed before as she had been in Pitt's lifetime, but still, she held no mean sway.

And now a sun rose in her life's story that had never shone on her before ; a sun, the radiance of which brought out all the softer and more delicate perfume of the flowers of her womanhood. She was in love for the first and only time, and she loved with all the most deep, mature love of woman ; loved as only such strong natures as hers can love, as it is only given to few to love here on earth ; loved with a love in which was her whole heart and soul. The man she loved gave back her love in full, and was well worthy of such a passion. England has written his name as a hero, and there is many a tear-stain round it. He was a soldier, and he had real military genius, for he was Sir John Moore.

If Moore had lived, if that page which tells of the day of glorious defeat at Corunna had never been written in history, the story of Hester Stanhope would have been a very different one from what it is. It would have been the story of a noble, devoted wife, and tender, loving mother. The eccentricities of her disposition would have been kept in the background by the firm influence of a husband who would have known how to rule her, because he possessed the golden key to her heart. We should, perhaps, have had to tell of her deeds of heroism done at her soldier's side ; we should, perhaps, have had to enroll her name among the names of the mothers of great men. She would, most likely, have developed fair blossoms of womanly self-sacrifice and fortitude.

But it was decreed that such things should not be. Sir John Moore was still kneeling at Lady Hester Stanhope's feet, in the first raptures of an accepted lover, when he was called to take the chief command of the British army in Spain. Was there no boding throb at her heart, as she clung to him at parting, which made her white arms hold him the closer ?

For awhile Lady Hester trod the paths of common life with feet that kept time to martial music, the music that would herald her hero's triumphant return. Then came across the sea the news which brought the nation such a glorious sorrow ; the news which gave the fatal blow to Hester Stanhope's earthly happiness. We all know the story of that death-bed on a foreign battle-field, but few perhaps know that Hester Stanhope's name was almost the last word on Sir John Moore's lips.

This loss of her promised husband is probably the key to much that is strange and unlovable in Lady Hester Stanhope's latter life. She did not melt into a naiad of perennial tears, as many a weaker woman in her sad position would have done ; but not the less did the wound bleed inwardly, while over it her character hardened and grew rough and prickly. A great, unutterable nausea came upon her of modern London, with all its mixture of hollow gilding and painted

vice. An irresistible longing seized her to break away from all social trammels. From her childhood she had loved to read and dream of the far East, with all its romance and tales of wondrous magic ; with its rich, languid perfumes, and gardens carpeted with many-tinted flowers, and thither she resolved to go.

In those days it was an almost unheard-of thing for a single woman of rank to start on a long foreign journey on her own account, and Society held up its hands very high indeed at such a proceeding ; but Lady Hester went her own way without even once looking back. She took with her several servants, a companion called Miss Williams, a doctor called Meryon, started for Constantinople, and in course of time arrived there.

The Turkish capital was soon resounding from end to end with stories of the rich and, as was said, rather crazy Englishwoman. One of these told how her ladyship one day took it into her head that she should like to pay a visit to a Turkish man of war. The commander of the vessel which she especially desired to favour with her presence sent a vehement, and not too courteous refusal to her request that she might come on board his ship. "No woman," he said, "had ever trodden his deck, and he was not at all inclined to make an exception in favour of a mad English lady."

In due course, the ungallant reply was delivered to Lady Hester ; she shrugged her well-sloped shoulders, smiled significantly, and kept silence.

Not long after that, the old sea bear, who had refused to bow before the sovereign will of beauty, was informed one morning that a foreign military officer of high rank was waiting in a boat alongside his ship, begging to be allowed to pay his respects to him and to be shown over the vessel. Now there was nothing the Turkish commander liked better than acting as cicerone in his own vessel to distinguished notabilities, and the stranger was welcomed on board with all honours. From bow to stern the Commandant conducted his visitor, leading him into the very sanctuary of his own cabin itself. The leave-takings were over, the stranger sat once more in his own boat ; then suddenly the general's cocked hat and feather which he wore was tipped off into the sea, and the Turk, to his unspeakable astonishment and horror, beheld gazing at him, with a look of saucy triumph in the sparkling eyes, a fairer face than any which peeped through the lattices of his own seraglio : the crazy Englishwoman had had her way at last.

From Constantinople Lady Hester Stanhope travelled on to Syria, and there, after a time, settled down permanently in a villa a few miles from Sidon. Here she lived out the rest of her life, and never again returned to Europe for so much as a short visit. She was looked up to with considerable reverence by the natives ; partly on account of the large establishment she kept causing her to be regarded as a sort of princess ; partly from her frequent dealings with those who

professed magic arts, making her an object of superstitious fear ; partly from her keenness of wit, which taught her to gain influence over the simple people round her. Certain it is that she had no slight power in Syria, and that she generally used it for good ends.

Lady Hester Stanhope grew more and more eccentric in both conduct and character as the years went on. She discarded entirely all female dress, and always wore the costume of an Eastern man. She had so much intercourse with Eastern magicians and astrologers that at length she seems to have grown herself to believe in many of their supernatural powers, and many of their superstitions. She took a violent dislike to her own sex, and was waited on almost exclusively by male attendants, and would seldom admit a woman into her presence. Luckless Dr. Meryon had once the audacity, when he paid a visit to England, to return with a wife ; but the poor lady was soon sent back again in a most summary manner. Her temper became most imperious and despotic, and her moments of passion were most excessive and unbridled. It was no unusual thing for every domestic in the villa to be blown out of it by one of these explosions.

Lady Hester Stanhope always preserved her faith in the Christian religion. She was a constant reader of the Bible ; indeed, in the latter years of her life, she is said to have read no other book besides it. Many of her religious beliefs were, however, of a singular kind. She believed in the immediate advent of the Messiah, and that she herself should hold a prominent place in His kingdom. One day a guest, who was visiting her, remarked on the beauty of two Arab horses that stood side by side in her stable, and evidently received special care and attention. She replied, in a quite matter-of-fact tone, that these were the two horses she was keeping for Christ and herself to ride on when they made their public entry into Jerusalem.

In spite of her arbitrary will, Lady Hester Stanhope was an exceedingly bad manager of her own household ; her servants pillaged her on every side, and, in consequence, her means grew more and more straitened. She continued, however, to use a large hospitality, and strangers, more especially if they came from England, were most freely and generously welcomed by her. The reception of one great English traveller by her stands out before us in a very distinct picture.

The villa wears its gala dress to-day ; there are costly rugs and carpets spread on all floors and divans, the servants are in rich costumes ; evidently a guest that is in no mean estimation with the mistress of the house is expected. By-and-by arrives a man with a keen, thoughtful, sunburnt face ; he is introduced into a vast apartment, scantily furnished according to Eastern fashion, and is left standing alone.

He is well used to all sorts of strange situations in his wanderings ; still, he does not quite know what to make of it as the minutes glide

on and no hostess appears. He remains near the door in some perplexity; suddenly he perceives that what looks like a long, white bundle lying on a divan at the further end of the large room is stirring. Slowly a figure rises and comes towards him. It is all white: white turban, transparently-white face, white garments. The traveller half thinks that he has found his way by mistake into some enchanter's abode, or that a trick is being played off upon him. Before, however, he has had time to put into shape his ideas, he is addressed in English by a lady-like woman's voice, and with as much courtesy as if he were in Buckingham Palace, and is quickly entangled in such a bright, many-tinted web of conversation that he is kept enthralled even till the shades of night have fallen. The author of "Eothen" has had his experience of what a visit to Lady Hester Stanhope is like.

During the last years of her life Lady Hester Stanhope suffered much from ill-health. She grew feebler and feebler in body, but the keen intelligence and dauntless spirit never failed or wavered. She would not grow old, though years were beginning to tell upon her.

One day, in the summer of 1839, some English visitors came early to the villa. They dismounted, they entered, but nowhere could they find a living human being: they were struck by a look of disorder everywhere. At length, in an inner apartment, they found the body of Lady Hester Stanhope lying cold and still. She had died in the night, and her servants had left the villa, each carrying off some piece of prey. Her countrymen laid her quietly to rest in the sunny garden of the villa.

ALICE KING.



VOICES.

THE wind's low whisper in the grass,
And louder murmur on the air;
And in my heart a silent voice,
And silent echoes there.

Could I but surely know and feel
What precious thing the low wind saith,
What blessed promise in my heart
That still voice whispereth—

Then should I no more doubt and fear,
As those that have no living stay,
For God's own Presence, shining clear,
Would melt these mists away.

GEORGE COTTERELL.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE.

BY F. M. F. SKENE.

IF science has of late years done much to elucidate many of the mysteries which surround us in the visible universe, there is no doubt that it has at the same time unearthed, from what may have been a merciful obscurity, various inexplicable phenomena, calculated to baffle the most acute intelligence that might seek to grapple with them.

Under this head may be classed the hypnotism—thought transference and duplex personality, and other singular problems of human consciousness—with which scientific men both in France and England are at present so largely occupied.

Facts in the histories of individuals which can throw any light on these perplexing questions have an intrinsic value—quite apart from any purely romantic interest they may possess—and the remarkable experience we are about to relate, touches also on that ancient and more familiar mystery which has shown in all ages how trifles, light as air, may become the instrument of portentous tragedies, wrecking helpless lives in irremediable fatality.

A young man was standing one November morning on the doorstep of his old country home in the north of England, waiting for his horse to be brought round. He was clad in the orthodox attire for a day's hunting, and seemed the very embodiment of health and strength, whilst his fair hair and clear complexion gave him a more youthful appearance than his five-and-twenty years might have warranted.

Presently his hunter, a thorough-bred bay, was brought to the door, but just as Harry Grantham was about to spring into the saddle, his mother's maid came running down the steps and told him that her mistress was awake, and wished to see him for a moment before he went out.

He turned at once and ran lightly up the oak staircase, which led to Lady Grantham's room—she owed her title to the fact that her husband, long since dead, had been a K.C.B.

The young man gave a quick knock at the door, then opened it gently and went in. His mother was sitting up in bed wrapped in a crimson shawl, with a look of eagerness and anxiety on her still beautiful face; age had not marred the symmetry of her fine features or dimmed the brightness of her eyes, and the glance of passionate fondness which she cast on her son was met by one from him almost equally tender.

"Forgive me for delaying you, dear Harry," she said, "but I could

not resist a strange, unaccountable longing to see you this morning before you left home. You will not let it be late to-night before you come back to me?" and she placed her arms round her son and strained him to her heart.

"Oh no, dear mother," he answered, as she released him. "It gets so soon dark now that it is impossible to go on very long in the afternoon."

"And now you are going to the hunt breakfast at Ringwood Hall, are you not?"

"Yes. There will be a great gathering there to-day, for it is quite the perfection of a hunting morning—mild and grey with a moist south wind—the scent will be capital; and Mr. Vivian manages the whole affair admirably; he is the best M. F. H. we have ever had. I wish you could see what a picturesque sight it is when we are all assembled on the lawn before starting."

"May Vivian goes with you, I conclude," said Lady Grantham, somewhat wistfully.

The colour rose in the young man's face. "Yes, certainly," he answered. "She never misses the chance of a good gallop across country. She is simply splendid on horseback, and rides more fearlessly than half the men in the field."

"I have never been able to understand how a girl so tender-hearted and sensitive as I know May Vivian to be, can bear to be present at the cruel business of breaking up the fox, as you term it." Lady Grantham was instinctively prolonging the conversation from a strange unwillingness to let her son pass out of her sight.

"But she never is present, mother," he said vehemently. "She has declared often that nothing would induce her to be in at the death. She cannot endure even to hear of wounds or hurts of any kind. Why, I have seen her grow white as snow at the sight of a cut finger. She is just the sweetest, most delicate-minded girl in the world." His face glowed with enthusiasm as he spoke.

"Ah, my boy," said Lady Grantham sadly, "it is plain enough how very dear she is to you."

"Well, mother," he returned, with a certain constraint, "I will not deny it, for I have no secrets from you; but, at the same time, it is not a subject on which I can ever speak again. I saw very clearly, when I was last at the Hall, that John Elrington has won that treasure, and no one else has the ghost of a chance."

"Sir John Elrington is a very fine-looking man," said Lady Grantham, "and I have always heard that he is clever, and likely to make his mark in the world; but, Harry, I can never think that anyone deserves happiness so much as my darling son."

He only answered by stooping down to kiss her tenderly on the forehead, and then struggling to shake off the gloom which had suddenly darkened his bright young face, he took leave of her cheerfully, and ran down the wide stairs to mount his horse.

Lady Grantham listened to his footsteps as long as they could be heard ; then, with a quick impulse, she sprang from her bed, wrapping her shawl round her, and, going to the window, flung it wide open and leant out, so that she could see him in his saddle just turning from the door. He heard the sound of the opening window, and looking up with the clear blue eyes, which were the light of life to her, he doffed his hat in a smiling salute and cantered away. She watched him with a straining gaze till he passed altogether from her sight, and then, as she turned back into the room, she said—unconscious, apparently, that she was speaking aloud into the silence—*"The only son of his mother, and she was a widow."*

II.

HARRY GRANTHAM had said truly that the gathering on the lawn of Ringwood Hall, after the hunt breakfast, was a striking spectacle. Most of the gentlemen resident in the county were there, mounted on well-groomed horses ; and Mr. Vivian, the master of the fine pack of hounds, held back with difficulty in their impatience to be off, was a conspicuous figure in his stalwart old age, with Sir John Elrington, a remarkably handsome man, on one side of him and his young daughter, May, on the other.

She was undoubtedly the fairest sight in all that gay assemblage, though not by any means the only lady who was there, in irreproachable costume, to follow the hounds. Her charming face was bright and joyous, as if her happy youth could never know a cloud, and her light, graceful figure was shown to advantage, poised on the back of a splendid horse, the strongest and fleetest in her father's stables.

Harry Grantham could not look on that beautiful picture without a pang, which stung him into a fierce desire to escape at least from the sight of John Elrington taking his place at her side as if by inalienable right, and when the signal was given for a general move, the young man rode hurriedly forward alone in advance of all the others. He kept that solitary position steadily without once looking back, even after a fox had been found and the hounds were in full cry in pursuit of it. The zest had been taken from his anticipated pleasure that day, and he galloped on mechanically, only anxious to keep well in front, so as to avoid having to speak to any acquaintance at a moment when his intense jealousy of one individual made him feel as if he held the whole human race in detestation.

Presently Harry became aware that one of his spurs had got loosened so that it was beating against his horse's side, and rendering the animal almost unmanageable. He was still well ahead of the main body of the field, and he believed he would have time to dismount and set the matter right before any of them came up with him. A high hedge was facing him when he arrived at this decision, over which he leaped at once and landed in a field where a farm

labourer was leisurely hoeing the ground in preparation for a winter's crop. Harry sprang off his half-frantic steed, and called out to the man :

"Here ! hold my horse, will you, while I fasten my spur ?"

He came forward at once, and led the animal away to a little distance, where he soon succeeded in quieting its excitement as the cause of irritation was removed.

Meanwhile, Harry, stooping down under the hedge, was entirely absorbed in the effort to secure his spur in its proper place as quickly as possible, so that for the moment he saw and heard nothing of what was passing round him.

Suddenly, May Vivian, whose exceptionally fleet horse had brought her foremost of all the field to that point, came right over the hedge in a flying leap at the very spot where Harry Grantham was bent down, with hands and eyes fully occupied. Her horse knocked him flat on the ground without her seeing him ; if she was even mechanically conscious of any momentary obstruction it only made her touch the animal with her riding-whip to urge him onwards, and as it sped away its iron-shod hoof struck the prostrate young man a violent blow on the head, and then it bounded onwards with a swiftness which soon bore its rider over hedges and ditches, far out of sight.

The light-hearted girl flew along in keen enjoyment of the rapid motion and of the fresh air blowing strongly in her radiant face, absolutely unaware that she had passed over any obstacle whatever. From the moment she left home her high-mettled horse had risen lightly at every gate or hedge in her path, bearing her over it like a flying bird, and, if occasionally his winged-feet spurned a bush or a little hillock of earth in his rapid course, it did not so much as attract her attention at all.

Thus it was, that in one moment—one brief, unnoticed moment—the gentle, sensitive young girl had become an unconscious murderess, and in a fleeting, scarce measurable space of time, a tragedy had been enacted, which was to steep joyous human lives in undying pain.

Perhaps of all those struck by the grim fatality as by a lightning flash, the principal victim was in truth the one on whom it had fallen with a certain unseen beneficence. Harry Grantham had received his death blow with a suddenness which left him no time for regret or fear—he passed out of a life which almost up to that day had been marked solely by unalloyed brightness and enjoyment. He was gone in his unsullied youth, and who shall say that he was not taken from the evil to come ? But what of the desolate mother, whose idol he had been ? What of the tender-hearted girl who must for ever be branded with the murderous act which had destroyed his life ? What of those who loved her and could never more escape the knowledge of her dire calamity ?

III.

MR. VIVIAN had been following his daughter as quickly as he could, with her stately lover at his side ; and it was only the special fleetness of her horse which had borne her to some distance in advance of them. In a very few minutes he and Sir John Elrington leapt the hedge within half-a-dozen yards of the spot where Harry Grantham lay motionless, face downwards, on the earth.

The farm labourer, who had witnessed the whole terrible catastrophe, had already fastened the riderless horse to a tree, and was rushing towards the inanimate form when the two gentlemen made their appearance close to him. He knew Mr. Vivian, and had also recognised his daughter ; and flinging up his arms he exclaimed, with no softening of the dreadful truth :

"Oh, sir, she has killed him ! She has killed poor Mr. Grantham ! I saw her do it."

"What ? who ?" exclaimed Mr. Vivian, bewildered ; but then his eyes fell on the prostrate figure stretched out almost at his feet. He dismounted hastily, while already John Elrington had flung himself out of his saddle and was kneeling beside the young man, trying to raise him from the ground. Mr. Vivian quickly joined him, and as they lifted the lifeless head a ghastly wound on the temple showed that death must have been instantaneous.

"Good heavens ! how dreadful !" exclaimed Mr. Vivian, almost letting the body fall from his arms in his utter dismay. "It is Harry Grantham ! What—what did you say ?" he added, turning to the labourer. "Did I hear you declare he had been killed ?"

"Yes, sir ; by the young lady—by Miss Vivian. I saw it all. Poor Mr. Grantham was stooping down under the hedge, fastening his spur while I held his horse, when the lady came flying over it on her big black horse, and knocked him clean down on the earth. But the lady was off like a shot, and never found out what she had done."

"God grant she never may !" said Mr. Vivian hoarsely, as he rose up slowly, his face livid with horror and pain. "It would simply annihilate her, my poor, gentle girl, if she ever knew it. I would move heaven and earth to keep such an awful knowledge from her."

"It must be kept from her, at any cost," said Elrington vehemently. "She must never know it, happen what may !"

Other horsemen had by this time reached the field, and although some, in the excitement of the chase, held on their way without stopping, several others rode up to Mr. Vivian to ask what had happened, and to know if they could be of any use. Amongst these was the local physician, who at once set himself to examine the body. A very brief survey was sufficient : he laid the lifeless form gently on the ground and stood up.

"There is nothing whatever to be done," he said. "The skull is shattered: he must have died instantly."

A few hours later all necessary arrangements had been made. The body was conveyed to the nearest inn to await an inquest on the following day; and the doctor undertook to break the direful tidings to Lady Grantham, whose medical attendant he was.

While Mr. Vivian and those cognisant of the tragedy had been thus occupied, the other members of the hunt, among whom was his daughter May, had continued their sport in total ignorance of all that had occurred. Finally, in the dusk of the afternoon, she returned slowly to Ringwood Hall, and found, as she expected, that her father had come home some hours previously.

Mr. Vivian had, in the meantime, taken counsel with his wife and with John Elrington, who had made no secret to the parents of his hope that their beautiful daughter would become his wife, and they agreed that nothing was to be said to May of the dreadful calamity, till they had all retired for the night. Then her mother was to tell her as gently as possible that there had been a sad accident, which had cost Harry Grantham his life, but without giving her any details, and afterwards every effort was to be made to prevent her from ever learning her own terrible share in the fatality—for they well knew that no one was less able than their peculiarly sensitive daughter to endure such a knowledge.

This conviction nerved Mrs. Vivian to tell her very calmly and soberly that Harry Grantham had sustained an accident in the hunting field which had proved fatal, but she entered into no particulars, and May naturally concluded that he had been thrown by his own horse and hopelessly injured so that death had quickly followed.

She was, of course, very much shocked and grieved at the sudden perishing of a young man whom she had seen only that morning in full health and vigour, but there was no personal sense of loss to her in the news. Harry Grantham was nothing to her but a mere acquaintance, and she had hardly been even aware of his admiration for herself; in fact, her whole heart and soul were absorbed in the deep love she bore to John Elrington, who was, she knew, to be her future husband; he had left her in no doubt as to his feelings towards her, and their marriage had only not been explicitly arranged because her parents had begged Sir John to wait till their dear child was somewhat older.

May talked sadly for a little time of the painful news her mother had brought her, and especially reverted, with much sympathy, to Lady Grantham, who was well known to be absolutely wrapped up in her only son; but the Vivians had merely a slight acquaintance with her, as she had lived almost entirely on the Continent till a short time previously, and since then had led a very retired life.

Mrs. Vivian was able, therefore, to leave her daughter comparatively calm and undisturbed when she bade her good-night, and went

away hoping, as the girl was thoroughly tired out after her long ride, that she would soon be fast asleep.

In this idea, however, the lady proved to have been singularly mistaken. Never in all her happy young life had May Vivian passed such a night as that which followed. Her slumbers had always been like those of a child, perfectly peaceful and dreamless; and on this occasion she closed her eyes as usual so soon as her head was laid upon the pillow; but there fell upon her then a strange, indefinite sense of horror, which haunted her under many confused images, each more painful than the last, through all the hours of darkness. She could never afterwards fully recall what these terrible visions had been, only she knew that Lady Grantham, bearing an awful aspect of suffering, was the centre of them all. Harry Grantham she did not see, but the consciousness of some dread calamity to him reflected in his mother's agony was present with her throughout.

When at last the morning light released May from the bondage of this mysterious terror, and she awoke shaken and unrefreshed—the traces of what she had endured were plainly visible on her young face usually so bright and beautiful. She was deadly pale; her eyes red and swollen with the tears she had shed unconsciously in her sleep; and she could not repress the fits of shuddering which seized upon her every few minutes, even when she went down to the room where the family were assembled for breakfast.

John Elrington was staying in the house, and he uttered an exclamation of dismay when he saw her changed appearance—the more startling to him because Mrs. Vivian had assured him that May had heard the sad news, so far as it had been told her, with perfect composure, unruffled by the slightest emotion.

In answer to the anxious inquiries as to her health—looking so ill as she did, May only replied that she was quite well, but that she had had a bad night and been disturbed by unpleasant dreams. Then she sat down in silence at the breakfast-table, where, however, it was evident that she did not even attempt to eat anything. When they all rose up, Elrington drew Mrs. Vivian into the library, allowing her to see clearly that he was in a state of great perturbation of mind.

"Surely May must have been much more attached to Harry Grantham than you knew," he exclaimed anxiously. "She looks as if she had been breaking her heart over him all night. Since she does not know that she had any share in his death; it can only be grief for the loss to herself which is affecting her so deeply."

"No; you are quite mistaken, Sir John," said Mrs. Vivian. "I know very well to whom my dear child's affections are exclusively given, as you will learn from her own lips some day. She never cared in the very least for Harry Grantham; but she has an intensely sympathetic nature, and she always feels for the sufferings of others to a very unusual extent."

Sir John seemed satisfied, and he left her to join Mr. Vivian, with

whom he was going to attend the inquest appointed to take place at noon that day. They were to be the principal witnesses along with the farm labourer who had actually been present when the terrible event had occurred. Mr. Vivian had succeeded in persuading the coroner not to summon his unfortunate young daughter to attend; he had seen him privately at an earlier hour and explained to him that she was entirely ignorant of the real circumstances of the case, and could only testify to the fact that she had made her horse leap all the hedges she had encountered that day without noticing any one in particular.

The room where the Coroner and his jury sat was crowded by nearly all the gentlemen who had been out with the hounds on that disastrous day, while the doctor and Lady Grantham's solicitors were also present.

The proceedings were soon over, for the facts were unmistakably clear, and the jury could only bring in a verdict of "death by misadventure." When this had been done, Mr. Vivian turned round and addressed the large assemblage of his friends and neighbours who filled the room. He spoke with a certain sad dignity of the cruel misfortune which had befallen his innocent child, and rendered her the instrument of death to the fine young man whose lifeless body they had just seen. It had been possible as yet, he said, to conceal the truth from her quite effectually, and it was his most anxious desire that she should never in any way become aware of her own sad share in the calamity—as such a fatal knowledge would simply be worse than death to her. All newspapers containing an account of the inquest would be sedulously kept from her, and he appealed to the friends who surrounded him to do all in their power to prevent any rumour of the real facts being brought to her. It need hardly be said that his petition was met with the utmost sympathy, and the most earnest assurances given to him that his wishes would be carefully carried out.

Later in the day Mr. and Mrs. Vivian went to Lady Grantham's house, anxiously desiring to see her, if possible, and tell her of their deep distress at their poor child's unconscious agency in her irreparable misfortune; but they could not obtain access to her. She was alone with her dead. She had locked herself into the room where her lifeless treasure lay, and refused to quit, even for a moment, the disfigured form which was all that remained to her of her life's lost happiness, so long as she could hold it back from the expectant grave.

IV.

It had been arranged by the Vivians before the occurrence of the calamity which weighed so heavily upon their house, that they should winter in the Riviera, as their son Edward, their only other child, was in a very delicate state of health. He was a year or two

younger than May, and was a beautiful boy, but he had never been strong, and a few months previously, symptoms of consumption had set in so decidedly that the doctors declared another winter in England would be fatal to him.

It had originally been settled that May was to go to Mentone with her parents, and that Elrington was to follow and enter on a formal engagement with her, which could be openly announced, so that the wedding might take place immediately on their return home in the early summer.

After the funeral of Harry Grantham, however, Sir John went to Mr. and Mrs. Vivian to propose that a different plan should be adopted.

He was passionately attached to May, but he was a man of very jealous temperament, and as she continued to be somewhat silent and abstracted, he could not altogether divest himself of the idea that she must have cared more for Harry Grantham than she had perhaps been aware of herself, and that if the truth respecting his death ever became known to her it might seriously interfere with their happiness when she should be his wife. He therefore suggested to her father and mother that they should not only allow the engagement to be ratified at once, but that the marriage itself should take place before they left home, so that he might, without delay, carry his young bride away from the neighbourhood which had become dangerous to her peace of mind, and place her in his own distant home where the recent tragedy could never be known. He promised if they would agree to this plan that he would bring May out to the Riviera in the early spring, so that she might help them to tend her brother in his failing health.

The Vivians willingly consented—they felt that, under the circumstances, it would be a kind and wise arrangement for their daughter, and they gave Elrington free leave to settle matters with her that same day, as he desired. He went away at once, full of hope and satisfaction, to seek for her.

The air was soft and mild that afternoon, and as Sir John was told by the butler that Miss Vivian was out walking in the grounds, he went quickly towards a spot which he knew to be her favourite haunt. It was a sheltered seat placed under the spreading branches of a magnificent cedar tree; and there, as he expected, he found her resting quietly in the complete solitude it afforded. She was leaning back, apparently in deep thought, for her book lay unopened on her knee.

As Elrington's footstep sounded close to her she looked up, and any doubt he might have had as to her feelings towards him ought to have been completely dispelled by the unmistakable glow of pleasure which brightened her sweet face at sight of him.

He sat down by her side and speedily entered on the subject that lay so near his heart; but as our object in this record is simply to

describe a strange psychological experience, we will leave John Elrington's version of the deathless old love story to our readers' imagination.

His success was complete. May Vivian was a delicate-minded maiden, but she was also truthful and open as the day; and since she did, in fact, love Sir John most heartily and faithfully, she owned to him that it was so with a very winning simplicity.

Then he told her of his great desire that their marriage should take place before the family left Ringwood Hall for the Riviera, and begged her to consent to this plan, assuring her at the same time that her parents had already willingly agreed to it.

May turned towards him with such an eloquent glance of happy acquiescence that it was plain she was ready to link her fate to his own so soon as he pleased, and her lips parted to give him the glad consent he desired.

The words were not spoken, however. Suddenly, in that same instant, a strange dark shadow seemed to pass over her face, quenching all its sunny brightness, while her eyes dilated with a look of horror unspeakable. For a few seconds she remained silent, and seemed to be listening to some sound unheard by Elrington, then a strong fit of shuddering shook her slight frame; with a violent effort she tore her hand out of her lover's grasp and started to her feet as if to fly from him, exclaiming:

"Oh, no—no—I cannot—I cannot! You must leave me—you must give me up! I can never go away into happiness with that voice ringing in my ears."

Elrington was startled beyond measure, and he caught her by the arm as she seemed just about to dart away from the spot.

"May, what on earth do you mean?" he exclaimed; "are you going to refuse me after owning that you love me?"

She writhed in his hold, and stretched out her hands as if to thrust him from her.

"Let me go—let me go!" she cried, "how can you ask me to come and be your happy wife with that mournful, cruel reproach wailing out to me in such piteous tones? do you not hear the voice and the words it utters? '*The only son of his mother, and she was a widow.*'"

"I hear nothing," said Elrington, somewhat sternly; "of whom are you speaking?"

"Of her—the desolate mother—lying in her darkened room—her very heart buried with him in his untimely grave."

"You mean Harry Grantham's mother?" said Sir John, rising to his feet, and fixing his eyes with a piercing gaze on the girl's death-like face. The jealous suspicions which had possessed him more or less since Grantham's death returned upon him in full force, and he grasped May's hands tightly while he spoke in a fierce, determined tone.

"Miss Vivian, we must understand each other. Do you mean to tell me that for some reason connected with Harry Grantham you refuse to be my wife? or is it only," he added, his voice softening, "that you object to so speedy a marriage as I desired? Are you willing to come to me a little later?"

"Oh, no—no!" she exclaimed, while her horror-stricken eyes seemed still to be gazing on some dreadful vision. "I can never come to you to be happy—let me go—it is cruel to hold me, you must leave me for ever."

She struggled to escape from him, and he released her angrily, saying as he flung her hands from him:

"Be it as you will, but you need not have fooled me, I think, by telling me that you loved me. It was a very useless lie, since it was to be so quickly refuted."

The young girl gave one look of anguish into his face, and then turned and fled from him towards the house, as if some unseen power were driving her away.

Sir John Elrington's resentment was not unnaturally bitter and deep. His pride was wounded to the quick; his strong love for the girl flung back upon himself, and his jealous temperament roused to a passionate extent—he came to the conclusion that May Vivian had been persuaded by her parents to accept him, but that her heart had really been given to Harry Grantham, and had revolted against the idea of any other marriage when it came to the point.

He did not hesitate for a moment as to his course. He walked straight back to Ringwood Hall and asked to see Mr. Vivian. He found him and his wife in the library together, and he at once stated in a few cold, trenchant words that their daughter had definitely and finally refused him, and that she had left him in no doubt she did so because she had been attached and probably engaged to Harry Grantham, and could not endure that any other should take his place.

Mr. Vivian looked perfectly bewildered at this speech, but Mrs. Vivian rose from her seat in great agitation.

"Sir John," she exclaimed, "there must be some serious mistake. It is not true that May had any affection for Harry Grantham. He admired her, I know, and I remember that you noticed it, but I do not think she was aware of it herself, and certainly she never cared for him in the smallest degree; she could not, indeed, for I know well that she loved you, and you only."

"Such may have been your impression," answered Sir John, with freezing politeness, "but it has been completely refuted by her own words."

"No, it is you who are mistaken," said Mrs. Vivian impetuously. "I cannot allow my poor child's happiness to be wrecked by some misunderstanding. Let me go to her and ascertain what her real meaning has been. You will wait here till I return?"

"Certainly," said Sir John, "if you can prove that there has been

any mistake I shall of course be deeply thankful, but I do not think you will find that Miss Vivian can easily give any different explanation of her words, from the very explicit statement she made to me."

Mrs. Vivian left the room, and Elrington paced to and fro, refusing Mr. Vivian's request that he would sit down, till her return. She came back at last looking greatly perplexed and troubled.

"May's state is very mysterious," she said. "I cannot understand it. I am quite as certain as I was before that Harry Grantham was literally nothing to her, and that she does love you, Sir John, deeply and devotedly; but she seems lost in some strange horror and misery, and she is possessed by a vision of the widowed mother in her agony of desolation."

"Do you think it is possible that she can in some way have learned the truth as to her having been the cause of his death?" asked Mr. Vivian.

"No, I am quite sure she is still in absolute ignorance of the fact," answered Mrs. Vivian. "Everyone has been most careful in never alluding to it, and when she casually mentioned his sad accident, only this morning, I saw she had not the slightest suspicion of it. I can only so far account for her present condition by supposing that her extraordinary sensitiveness makes her feel as if it would be almost cruel and heartless in her to be very happy when poor Lady Grantham is so lonely and miserable."

"A very hyper-sensitiveness, certainly," said Sir John bitterly; "and is it to go on for the rest of her life with its present results?"

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Vivian. "I hope and believe it is a mere passing fancy. John, let me ask you to have a little patience with my poor May—I know she is dear to you."

"She has been so, indeed, more than I can say. She is the only woman I have ever wished to make my wife."

"Then let us wait till the time originally thought of for your marriage—it is plain that the speedy wedding you suggested cannot now take place; but we will bring May with us to Mentone, and if you will join us there as was first arranged I think you will find that all the sad associations of this neighbourhood will have passed from her mind, and that she will be only too glad to welcome you back and agree to your wishes."

It was a relief to Elrington to agree to this plan, and so it was settled. They were all alike of opinion that Sir John and May had better not meet for the present, and he decided, therefore, to leave England at once, while the Vivians were to hasten their departure and be ready to receive him at Mentone in the course of a very few weeks.

V.

MAY VIVIAN'S distress when she heard of her lover's departure was quite unmistakable. She made, in fact, no effort to conceal it, and

she only regained her composure on her mother's assurance that she would see him again in a very short time in the Riviera.

The Vivians had soon reason to be very thankful that they were able to leave England without further delay, for their young son began to suffer much from the cold and damp weather, and it was evident that if he were not at once removed to a warmer climate his malady would make fatal progress. Preparations for their journey were therefore made as quickly as possible; May helping in the arrangements with manifest delight and admitting quite openly that she was longing with eager impatience for the day which should see them fairly on their way to Mentone and John Elrington.

That day came; the carriage was at the door to convey them to the station—Edward had already been placed in it wrapped in furs, and May with her father and mother stood on the steps ready to seat themselves beside him—they only paused a moment to take leave of Miss Berkeley, Mrs. Vivian's sister, who had been staying with them for a short visit before their departure and was to return to her own home in London so soon as they were gone. The farewells were over; Mrs. Vivian entered the carriage and sat down; her husband hastily followed and called out to his daughter to follow quickly. She was standing at the top of the short flight of steps which led from the door, and at once obeyed him by commencing rapidly to descend them.

Suddenly she stopped short with one foot on the lowest step, as if transfixed—rigid and immovable, save for a strong fit of shuddering which shook her from head to foot, at the same instant a deathlike pallor spread over her face, her eyes opened wide in a gaze of indescribable horror; then a wild cry broke from her trembling lips and she uttered almost the same strange words which had driven Elrington from her.

"Oh, I cannot—I cannot! Shall I go away to sunshine and happiness while she sits there in her dark, cruel solitude, mourning for him—the only son of his mother, and she a widow?"

May turned and ran quickly up the steps to the door as if about to re-enter the house, but her mother sprang hastily from the carriage and hurried forward to intercept her.

"May! do not be so capricious," she said; "this is no time to give way to hysterics. You must come into the carriage at once and not cause any foolish delay."

"No—no!" she exclaimed in a tone of anguish, while she struggled to push past her mother and get into the house. "I cannot go with you—not now or ever—I must stay here under the shadow of this awful misery."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Vivian, coming angrily up the steps. "I think you have taken leave of your senses, child; but I'll stand no more nonsense, you shall come with me this moment."

And he was about to lay hold of her when she broke frantically away from him and darting through the open door rushed up the stairs to her own room.

"Is the girl mad?" said Mr. Vivian fiercely. "Here, let me pass—I'll fetch her back if I have to use main force."

"Oh! do not let us be rough with her," said Mrs. Vivian, half weeping; "the poor child is nervous and upset, leave me to go to her. I will bring her down at once, she will come with me." And she went quickly into the house, followed by her sister.

They found May lying on her bed sobbing convulsively, while the hat and cloak in which she was to have travelled were lying on the floor where she had torn them off. Mrs. Vivian knelt down beside her and spoke caressingly.

"My dear child, you must control yourself and drive away all these dark fancies. You know how glad you were to hear that you were going to Mentone to see John Elrington again; you must not distress him and all of us as you did before, by giving way to these fits of nervousness. Come, get up and let us go, you must not keep poor Edward and your father waiting."

"Oh, why do you torture me?" cried May, lifting her blanched, tear-stricken face from the pillow. "I cannot leave this place. It would be easier to die than to go away to love and joy with that voice ever sounding in my ears—ever telling me of her, the widowed mother, mourning for her only son. Oh, leave me in pity that I may cease to hear it. Leave me! leave me!"

"What is to be done?" said Mrs. Vivian to her sister despairingly. "I cannot bear to see her tormented."

"There is only one course left to you," said Miss Berkeley in her quiet, sensible voice; "Edward must be your first consideration now, and for his sake you cannot delay your journey. Leave May here with me; I will stay with her till this hysterical paroxysm is past, and then I will bring her out to you at Mentone—I hope she may be able to travel in a few days."

And so it was arranged.

After her parents' departure, May gradually became composed. She remained in her room that day, but on the following morning she came down as usual, and in the course of about a week, she had returned to her usual sweet and gentle serenity without any trace remaining of her strange agitation.

There seemed no reason why she should not proceed on her journey to Mentone; and at last, choosing a favourable moment when May was sitting quietly beside her aunt, Miss Berkeley suggested that they should make their arrangements for rejoining her parents that day, and start on the following morning. At the very first sentence May sprang from her seat, trembling and pale, and caught her aunt almost frantically by the arm.

"Hush, hush!" she said; "for heaven's sake do not say a word

about my going away, or the horror will come back upon me and I dread it more than any language can express. I can feel it even now drawing near. If you say another word it will overtake me—the wailing voice will sound—oh, be silent on that subject, I entreat of you.”

Miss Berkeley was a judicious woman. She took her niece by the hand and made her sit down again quietly by her side, while she spoke in a calm, firm voice.

“My dear May, I have no wish to distress you, but it is absolutely necessary for your own sake that we should come to a distinct understanding as to what you mean to do. I must let both your parents and Sir John Elrington know whether you intend to go to Mentone or not.”

“Then write and tell them that I do not mean to go. That I cannot go—never—never.”

“May, have you reflected on the result of such a determination?” said Miss Berkeley. “If you do not go to Mentone now, it is quite certain that all will be at an end between you and John Elrington. I believe that you love him,” she added, looking keenly at the girl.

“With all my heart,” said May impulsively.

“Then you had better understand clearly that you will lose him for ever if you do not go to meet him now, as you promised—he is not a man to be trifled with.”

“Do you think I do not know that I have lost him already?” exclaimed May, flinging out her hands with a gesture of despair. “I knew it in that first moment when the unknown horror came between me and him. I hoped against hope for a little time after, but that second time when it fell upon me was final and fatal. I know now that I can never be his happy wife. It is all a dreadful mystery—I only know that awful vision, that mournful voice must for ever come between me and happiness; I may live on here, perhaps, in a precarious peace, but I must be dead to John Elrington—dead, as if I were already in my grave. Let us never speak of it again.” Without another word she rose abruptly and left the room.

Miss Berkeley had been studying the doctrine of telepathy and various kindred theories, and she decided that some occult influence was at work on May Vivian which it was in vain to combat. She therefore wrote to Mrs. Vivian and told her all that had passed, adding that there was no longer the least hope of May joining them at Mentone.

John Elrington had already been waiting there some days in the hope of his young bride’s arrival, and he had come to Mrs. Vivian’s sitting-room in the hotel to watch for the post when this letter was brought in.

“From my sister,” she said; “now we shall know when May is coming.” She opened it quickly and Elrington anxiously scanned

her face while she read it ; at last, however, she let it fall from her hands with a heavy sigh and turned hopelessly away. "Is your daughter coming?" said Sir John imperiously.

"No ; you had better read my sister's account yourself."

He took up the letter and read it through, then his face hardened into an expression of proud and stern determination and he flung it down, saying coldly :

"Mrs. Vivian, there is no longer any question that I have received my quietus, and I have simply to inform you that I will trouble your daughter no more ; to-morrow I shall leave this place for a long journey to India and elsewhere, and I trust that in those new scenes I may be able to forget the false hopes that were once so dear to me."

May Vivian's mother could make no answer to such a speech, and so they parted. John Elrington carried out his intention of leaving Mentone next day, and in this record he appears no more.

Miss Berkeley, unselfish woman as she was, remained living quietly with her niece at Ringwood Hall when she would much rather have been in her own London home ; and May, though somewhat sad and silent, was docile and quiescent, now that the fatal subject was completely dropped between them.

VI.

It was Christmas Eve, a dull, gloomy December day, and the two ladies were sitting quietly by the fireside—not apparently much disposed to brave the ungenial weather.

Suddenly, however, without addressing her aunt at all, May rose and left the room. Very hurriedly she dressed herself for walking, and went out. Some impulse, which she could not define or control, guided her feet at a rapid pace along the two or three miles which intervened between her home and the churchyard, where Harry Grantham lay in his untimely grave.

It was not a spot which the Vivians ever frequented, as it was at some distance from their own parish church ; and when May arrived at the gate, and passed within the sad enclosure, she looked round vaguely, not knowing in which direction to turn for the tombstone she sought.

A man was engaged in repairing the churchyard wall, and she attracted his attention : he knew her well, for it was he who had held Harry Grantham's horse on that disastrous day and seen the dreadful occurrence which had made May Vivian his murderess. He came up to her, touching his hat.

"You'll be looking for young Mr. Grantham's grave I expect, Miss Vivian. I can show it to you ; it's round the other side of the church."

"Thank you ; take me to it," she answered. Then, as they walked on together, she looked at him curiously.

"How did you know that I wanted to find Mr. Grantham's grave?" she asked.

"Well, miss, it seemed natural like that you should come to grieve over him a bit—seeing that you was the cause of his death."

"I the cause of his death!" she exclaimed, standing still as if frozen with horror. "Do you mean to say that I killed him?"

"Yes, miss: you knew it, surely, as everyone else did; but no one better than me; for I was there holding his horse for him while he put his spurs right, when you came crashing over the hedge and struck him down like a log upon the earth. He was stone dead when we took him up—and there he lies," added the man, quite unaware what an awful revelation he had made to her in his brutal frankness. He pointed to a grave covered with a white marble slab, on which Harry Grantham's name appeared, with the words inscribed below it: "*The only son of his mother, and she was a widow.*"

With a wild cry of anguish May Vivian rushed forward and fell on her knees beside it.

"I am his murderess," she said. "Now I understand it all."

"Bless my soul; did she never know that afore!" exclaimed the labourer. He stood open-mouthed in his surprise, staring at her for a few minutes; then turned stolidly away and went back to his work.

May remained motionless, with her head laid upon the cold tombstone, suffering intensely, while strange, conflicting thoughts and feelings thronged upon her, as if from some mysterious source wholly apart from her own individuality; gradually, as she lay there prone upon the earth, a light began to dawn on her mind—a path seemed to open before her in the future wherein she was destined to walk, and find the peace and sense of rectitude which had been literally torn from her by her dark psychological experience. An hour passed over her—an hour which separated her for ever from all that had been life to her before, and set her on the threshold of a new retributive existence.

When she rose, pale indeed, but calm and resolute, while her eyes shone with a pure light altogether free from the troubled, bewildered expression with which they had so long been clouded, she turned, and with a quick, firm step, took her way to the Granthams' house. Arrived at the door where Harry had stood on that fatal hunting morning, glowing with the strong young life which seemed then to be stretching out so many years before him, she rang the bell, and, when the servant appeared, asked to see Lady Grantham.

The man answered that her ladyship received no visitors.

"She will see me," said May decisively; and, walking past the astonished butler, she went on through the hall as if impelled by some strange instinct, and opened a door, which was, in fact, that of Lady Grantham's sitting-room. She closed it softly as she entered, and stood for a moment with her eyes fixed sadly on the spectacle before her.

The room was darkened by the closed blinds, which had never been lifted since the young man's coffin was carried from the house. Opposite to a picture of him which hung on the wall sat the widowed mother, her mournful gaze rivetted upon it as she lay back wearily in her chair, with her unoccupied hands clasped on her lap. She turned her head at the sound of the closing door, and May, meeting her questioning glance, darted forward and sunk on her knees by her side.

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me!" the girl cried out. "I never knew till within this last hour that I was the unhappy cause of your terrible agony in your cruel loss. But the weight of your misery has been upon me, wrenching me away from all happiness, though I could not understand it, and now I feel as if I could die to gain your forgiveness."

Sobs choked her utterance, and Lady Grantham, disengaging her hand from May's convulsive grasp, laid it gently on her bowed head.

"Poor child," she said, "I owe you no forgiveness; I well know that you were but the unconscious instrument of the Power which has decreed my desolation. I have never blamed you; rather, May, I have thought of you tenderly, for my Harry loved you—you knew that it was so, did you not?"

"No," said May, looking up with her tear-dimmed eyes. "I did not then—not—not when I used to see him; but I have known it in some mysterious way since he has been gone, and therefore I have dared to come to you."

"Yes, he loved you truly, and for his sake you must be ever dear to me, even though you——" She stopped, shuddering, and then went on sadly: "Ah! May, he would have made you happier than the cold, proud man you have chosen; it is bitter, indeed, to think of John Elrington in all the sunshine of happiness by your side and my Harry lying alone in his dark grave." Her mournful voice sank to a whisper, and May flung her arms round her.

"Lady Grantham, I shall never be John Elrington's wife; we are parted utterly and for ever—all is at end between us. Harry has willed it so and I consent. I want only to be your child, your daughter, to do all for you I might have done had I been your dear son's wife. Oh! let me come to you, let me be with you always; you have called me—yes, you have called me again and again, and he has risen before me and pointed to you in your loneliness. I have understood his desire, and I have come; it is only just and right that I should give my life to you since it was my terrible fate to take his dear and priceless life away from you."

"Dear child, you are generous to think of such a sacrifice, and I should be thankful indeed to have you with me, for my Harry loved you, and my cruel desolation makes me often feel as if I could endure it no longer and must seek oblivion in that grave where my darling lies and I, in heart, am buried with him—but how could I take you from your parents? they would never consent to give you to me."

"They would—they must," said May vehemently; "they would have given me up for ever to John Elrington: how much more righteously to you! I am theirs no longer. I know, I feel, that I belong to you. I took your darling from you, and it is he who gives me to you now. Oh, make no more resistance. There are powers at work we cannot combat. Let us never part again."

"May, I believe that you are right," said Lady Grantham slowly. "I, too, have often felt lately a strange influence that made me long for you as if my Harry desired that you should fill the void your own unconscious action has made in my life; now all is clear and right; it shall be as you say—in this world we will part no more. I have lost a son—you shall be to me as a daughter."

She bent down and kissed May with a certain solemnity as if to seal a vital compact, while the girl's grasp tightened round her. And thus it is that the curtain falls on this strange drama—with the widowed mother clasped in the arms of her who had caused the death of her only son, and finding in that embrace a heavenly peace and consolation.



FOREGONE.

THERE is none anywhere
So beautiful as she, or half so dear;
My soul is glad whenever she draws near,
Because she is so good and sweet and fair.

I shall not be the one
To break the cloistered stillness of her youth;
To teach her passion and pain, and love and truth,
And lead her through the Garden of the Sun.

But when her joy-bells ring
I think, perhaps, that I shall smile and sigh,
And wish that roses did not bloom to die,
And that the birds of June might always sing.

For I am sad and wise,
And where my dreams lie dead the grass has grown;
But she has taught me grief for youth long flown,
And what men mean who talk of Paradise.

E. NESBIT.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM
MAJORCA," "THROUGH HOLLAND," ETC.



BRETON PEASANT.

WE had intended returning by train to Quimper, even as we had come. But this did not enter into the views of our enterprising driver. In his opinion, we should do much better to keep the carriage for the next two days, take a long drive round the coast, sleep at Beg-Meil, continue our journey the next day to Concarneau, and arrive at Quimper in the evening of that day.

The idea commended itself to us; the plan seemed good; with all his faults, he was an excellent driver, and the trap was comfortable; it was a very agreeable way of travelling. But Beg-Meil? We had never heard of it. Where and what was it?

"Beg-Meil?" said Jean le cocher. "It was a new dis-

covery. In time it would be the most famous sea-side place in Brittany. Already it had the best hotel to be found anywhere, at which people stayed the whole summer through. To miss Beg-Meil would be disastrous."

This sounded well, but we felt that it must be taken cum grano; there is often a great deal of difference between promise and performance. Therefore we took Madame at the hotel into our council, and gave her the casting vote.

"You could not do better," was her reply. "If you are willing to give the two days to the drive, it will well repay you. In fine weather the country is charming. You will see Pont-l'Abbé and the rocks of Penmarc'h, which are grand, though not at all equal to the Pointe du Raz. Beg-Meil I have never visited, but from all accounts it must be a little paradise, though isolated; and just at this time

of the year you will have it all to yourselves. As for Concarneau, it is one of the most interesting fishing places in our part of the world."

This short debate had taken place in Madame's bureau, after her excellent table d'hôte had come to an end. Our little driver had arrived for our decision, and stood like a stork upon one leg, all anxiety and eagerness. There seemed no choice in the matter; it would never do to miss this succession of interesting points. Therefore it was settled that we should start early the next morning, and Jean departed in the seventh heaven of delight.

We went down to the little harbour of Douarnenez, and watched the shades of night falling upon the water and the boats. The lighthouse had mounted its beacon, and one by one the lights shone out from the little fleet in the offing. All was very quiet and still; not a soul upon the pier, no stirring amongst the vessels; a charming picture of still life and repose; of rest after toil; a vivid contrast to the little town, where, as we passed through the narrow thoroughfares, the fisher men and women were loitering in rough and rather noisy groups.

The fishing element of the town keeps itself very much apart from the ordinary population. A small colony of houses also stretches on the side of the steep cliff down to the port, and zig-zag paths led from one house to another, but were not tempting enough to explore. The bathing beach is quite a mile and a half away from the town.

We returned through the darkness, losing our way in all sorts of impossible windings, and sometimes coming back to our starting point. In our own part of the town all was quiet. The last train was in, the last omnibus had rattled up with its solitary passenger—an enterprising Frenchman, who contemplated doing to-morrow what we had done to-day. Madame was casting up her accounts in her bureau; and Monsieur, his duties in the kitchen at an end, was smoking the pipe of peace with a friendly neighbour on a bench in front of the hotel.

"A strange little town, monsieur," he said, as we took seat beside him, before going in for the night. "You may well think yourselves at the ends of the earth. All might be so much better than it is, if we had any enterprise amongst us. I have done my best to stir up the authorities, but it is of no use. We go on in the same sleepy way year after year. I thought that when the railway was opened we should awaken, but instead of that we seem slower than ever. The fishing prospers, but the town remains stationary. The fishermen have the money, and will catch and cure their fish and send it out into the world though the rest of the town fell into wreck and ruin."

"Yet few towns equal you in situation," we observed.

"That is the pity of it," replied our host. "We are so little, and we might be so much. The whole town, the whole fishing colony, wants taking down and rebuilding, and that will never happen."

Even Audierne has greater possibilities than Douarnenez, or it would have, if the railway were extended to it."

"Audierne is nearer that wonderful rocky coast," we observed, "and you may enjoy its fine pier and harbour without toiling through a labyrinth of back streets. Here you are cut off from the harbour and the sea. You must even walk a mile and a half to bathe."

"Ah! that Pointe du Raz!" exclaimed our host enthusiastically. "Many a pilgrimage have I made there. It attracts me as the sunshine draws the cloud. I have seen it over and over again in all moods. Days when it has been calm as a lake, and you might think it absolutely motionless but for the froth and foam surrounding the rocks. Days when the sea has been running mountains high, and every succeeding wave seemed to dash with greater fury against the iron coast. I remember one storm in particular. The time was five years ago last November. It was an intensely dark night. All day long the sea and the wind had been rising. By ten o'clock it blew a perfect hurricane; by midnight I had never seen or heard anything so terrible. Flash after flash of lightning showed up the sky and intensified the succeeding darkness. The thunder rolled and crashed overhead, until many of us thought the last day had arrived. The bell of the village church could scarcely be heard ten yards away. All the village folk were abroad on the heights, for no one could rest in bed on such a night. Every flash revealed the groups with startling vividness, and on every face might be read awe and anxiety. Every one seemed waiting for a given signal. It came—the signal of a ship in distress. Suddenly a rocket shot up into the air. A vessel was being driven on to the rocks. In the flashes we dimly saw a huge form struggling hopelessly with the waves. We lighted bonfires, and the lighthouse flashed its warning, but of what use was all this at such a moment?"

"And the vessel—was she saved?" we asked, for Monsieur had paused in his narrative to re-light his pipe.

"She was dashed to pieces," he replied, "and her living freight went with her. By that time we had all left the heights and gone down to the beach, though powerless to help. No boat could live in such a sea; the bravest amongst the villagers felt it would be throwing away their own lives to attempt it. So there we waited in helpless agony, whilst the good ship went to pieces and passengers and crew were rocked to their last sleep. The first body to be washed ashore was that of a woman, clasping an infant to her breast. She was quite dead, but strange to say, the child was still living. It was taken by one of the good mothers of the village, and there it remains to this day—the only little life that was spared amongst them all; and she—scarcely a year old—was too young to tell the heart-rending tale. But these scenes are constantly taking place on our rocky coast; the people grow familiar with them, or I hardly know how they would live through them."

We were sitting partly in shadow, partly in the light thrown by the hotel on to the road. The street was deserted ; most people had gone in for the night ; all was calm and quiet. The landlord's long pipe glowed in the darkness. He fell into silence and seemed to be brooding upon the scene he had just described.

"Yes," he said presently ; "if I were not master of this hotel, I would sooner be lighthouse keeper at the Pointe du Raz than anything else. I should like to live for ever in sight and sound of that wonderful sea and coast. Sometimes, I feel inclined to enter into a speculation and build an inn there. But it would fail ; it is too remote, too far from a railway ; I must be content."

"Do you know Beg-Meil ?" we asked him.

"Indeed I do," he returned. "It is a charming spot and has a future before it. If to-morrow be fine you will have a magnificent day. I could find it in my heart to turn coachman and drive you myself ; but things go wrong here without the head to guide them."

We had to be up early the next morning, so bidding our host good-night, we left him to his bench, his pipe, his neighbour and his recollections : one more instance of the strange freaks of destiny. Here was a man whose soul seemed in tune with nature in her wild moods, passing his life in the prosy details of a commonplace household, and devoting his energies to the serious task of making both ends meet at the end of the year.

The next morning rose with promise. Our coachman was more than punctual. He had got himself up in his very best, and his face beamed again. Monsieur and Madame assisted at our departure ; a very worthy couple, whose house was far more comfortable and better kept than anything we had found in Quimper.

The town was soon left behind and we passed into the country. Now the road skirted the coast, and showed up a wide extent of sea sparkling in the sunshine. Now, turning inland, we passed through lanes where the hedges were high and everything was flourishing and cultivated. Here and there small, well-kept farm-houses looked the essence of peace and prosperity. Fields of grain waved in the breeze, and innumerable orchards groaned under the weight of their fruit ; apples that would presently be turned into cider being most abundant. The country was richer and more cultivated than is often the case in Brittany, where, under the influence of gray skies and damp climate, fruit and crops come to slow and not very luxuriant perfection. The few people we met on the way wished us the "*Bon jour*," the men taking off their hats, the women nodding their heads as if we had been old acquaintances. The driver was evidently well-known to many, and the familiar greetings that passed were all given in the unknown tongue. We came upon few villages, and those few were small and deserted. About eleven o'clock the roofs and church towers of Pont-l'Abbé opened up ; we crossed the bridge over the river which gives its

name to the town, and immediately after drew up at the primitive little inn.

If Douarnenez was quiet and uneventful, Pont l'Abbé was still more so. It has not above half the number of inhabitants, but is more interesting and better built. Many of the streets are quaint; many of the houses are old; grass grows in the deserted thoroughfares. In many a doorway girls and women were sitting, embroidering the costumes of the country, and many a window exhibited the work for sale. Nearly all the women we saw wore the costume. It was varied and fanciful, and the costumes are amongst the most ancient in Brittany. The curious and original caps scarcely cover the crown of the head, and yellow and scarlet seemed the distinguishing colours. To a great extent the men have abandoned their costume, but those that remain are very quaint, consisting of vestments of various colours and sizes, bound round with broad tape bearing inscriptions written in different coloured wools.

Pont l'Abbé is an ancient baronial stronghold, and some remains of the castle in which the barons held sway still exist on the banks of the river, a picturesque and still inhabited building. Close to this a sale of fish, and an animated scene was going on. A small crowd of men and women were pushing each other about, haggling and bargaining, and making noise enough for a Dutch auction. The spirit of commerce evidently was not quite dead in the sleepy town, which dates back to the twelfth century. Its first baron, Juhel du Pont, was taken prisoner at the siege of Dol in 1173.

The parish church is part of an ancient Carmelite convent, founded in 1383 and restored in the fifteenth century. It is chiefly remarkable for its beautiful rose window, and once upon a time possessed very interesting and graceful cloisters. These have long since ceased to be trodden by the monks. In the church some of the ancient barons of Pont l'Abbé repose in tombs emblazoned with their shields and quarterings.



BRETON PEASANT.

Here, whilst our horses rested, we took a fresh conveyance for Penmarc'h. Passing out of the town by the river-side, we presently left on our right a fine sixteenth century château of Gothic architecture, that has been well restored by its present owner and possesses an interesting collection of antiquities, besides a fresco of the time of Henri IV. This Château de Kernuz, as it is called, withstood a bold attack at the time of the Ligue, and in the park belonging to it the Lord of Kernuz who valiantly resisted the enemy lies buried.

The surrounding country was flat and bare ; few objects remain to show that it has played any part in the past. It is the country of dolmens and menhirs, and the singular mounds attributed to the Druids are the only inequalities to be found here. Between Plomeur, an unimportant village through which we passed, and Penmarc'h the country abounds with these ancient relics. The place might be a graveyard containing the bodies of those who have slept for ages in undisturbed repose ; it looked a huge, bare plain—uncultivated, abandoned. The villagers of Plomeur seemed rude and uncivilised ; the children running about the street looked ragged and uncared for. Probably they are simply poor, though here even the poorest happily seldom fall short of the necessities of life.

Finally, after a drive of about three quarters of an hour, we reached Penmarc'h. The village is at a little distance from the shore and the lighthouse.

Four hundred years ago it was a place of importance ; one of the chief maritime cities of France, taking rank with Nantes. It was rich and its trade was extensive. The whole territory between Penmarc'h and Kerity was one great, densely-populated town, of which to-day you may trace many of the ruins. Nothing remains of the former prosperity but an historical record and a few isolated buildings. There are, for instance, six churches in the neighbourhood, marking the extent of the ancient town. To resist the invasion of enemies, both at home and abroad, many of the houses possessed their own private fortifications. Several, of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, yet remain, with their battlemented walls and portcullis, crowned by a small turret containing an alarm bell.

But there came an end to the great city. Suddenly the soil subsided, and a tidal wave swept away part of the town ; and lastly Fontenelle, towards the end of the Ligue, came down with his brigands and pillaged and destroyed the remainder. The town never recovered the blow. It gradually disappeared, leaving nothing but a wide extent of ruins to show what once had been. Of these ruins few traces remain, and even they will soon disappear, for the stones are being removed to build up houses elsewhere.

The villagers of Penmarc'h—a village that has sprung up upon the ruins of the ancient city—were as inquisitive and uncivilised as those of Plomeur. Their lives are marked by few events, and a traveller passing through to the seashore will call them to their doors and

create a little excitement. The village contained nothing of interest excepting the church: the largest of all the churches that existed in the neighbourhood, dedicated to St. Nonna, and dating entirely from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Rising above the small houses, it looked dignified. Exposed to three centuries of storm and



PENMARC'H.

tempest, showing a bold front to the sea, it has gradually assumed a fine tone and colouring. Above the front rises a substantial square tower, supported by heavy buttresses, and in the arcade of the Gothic doorway, dating from 1508, are rich sculpturings of ships, whilst the mouldings are finished off with delicately-carved vine leaves. The interior has some good stained windows.

A short drive from the church brought us to the lighthouse and

the very edge of the sea—or rather to where the sea would be at high water. The whole beach before us was one great extent of flat, slippery rocks, wet and weedy, with pools and crevices of water between them. Here were no bold cliffs; nothing, apparently, to resist the inroads of the sea in its furious moods and save the surrounding country from being swamped. Wild, desolate and savage it all looked, but without the grandeur and magnificence of the Pointe du Raz. To atone for this, the coast is less dangerous, and fewer wrecks take place. Right and left, at a distance, may be seen a group of still inhabited houses. That to the left is Kerity, and close to its lighthouse is a small church, now almost in ruins, formerly a Commandery of the Knight Templars.

So far, the neighbourhood of Penmarc'h is historically interesting. Some of the six churches that formerly existed are in ruins, of which the most imposing and important is the Chapel of St. Guénolé, dating back to the fifteenth century. The fine square tower still remains, supported by buttresses, and above its rich portal is a large window with remarkably fine tracery. The west front is also adorned with sculpturings of sea subjects, and an inscription that is no longer legible.

In these remains, Penmarc'h possesses the advantage over the Pointe du Raz. The coast sweeps round in a vast curve, and far off may be seen the point of Audierne. The sea is wide, and when the tide turns rolls in rapidly: the flat rocks disappear, and the water washes almost the very feet of the lighthouse.

The air was fresh and bracing, and we felt that we should like to spend a long week exploring the coast and the ruins, and sailing upon the lovely water. It was a wonderful scene, wild and remote, and somehow felt a little less uncivilised than the Pointe du Raz, perhaps because a few more people were in evidence.

When we took our way back to Pont l'Abbé, we felt that it was a farewell to this wild and romantic coast of Finistère. We had seen it in its calmer mood, "with a west wind blowing," but we realised all it was capable of when the spirit of the storm is abroad with all its powers of destruction.

We returned to Pont l'Abbé in time for déjeuner, a series of mysterious dishes strongly flavoured with garlic, everyone of which had to be refused. Two Bretons at the table who appreciated everything, wondered openly at our want of taste. But this was not the only dilemma in which we found ourselves. We had left Quimper without a sufficiency of French money, and at Pont l'Abbé it became necessary to change English money into the coin of the realm. At Douarnenez they had declined both notes and gold, declaring that they could do nothing with them, but that Pont l'Abbé, having more communication with foreign powers, would take any amount.

Pont l'Abbé, however, quite as much as Douarnenez, declined the honour. We were sent from one house to another, always

with the same result—they had no use for English money. Neither notes, nor gold, nor premium would tempt them. It was a predicament, for we had only enough French money to carry us to Concarneau; and it seemed unlikely that Concarneau, a small fishing place, would be more civilised and obliging.

We met with a Welsh missionary at Pont l'Abbé, who lived and worked amongst the people, and was well known; and even with his help failed in our object. The missionary was all kindness, and showed us what little the town possessed of interest. He worked chiefly amongst the sailors, and found it slow and difficult work to penetrate to their intelligences, or make much impression upon them; but on the whole he liked the Bretons, and perseverance generally met with its reward in the end.

We left Pont l'Abbé when the sun had reached its meridian, on our way to Beg-Meil. The coachman had in no way exaggerated the charms of the drive. As before, the country was fertile and cultivated. In many of the narrow country lanes the hedges were high, and wild flowers grew in abundance. Here and there small pine forests plunged us into a delightful and shady coolness; the sun threw lights and shadows across our path, and squirrels darted from tree to tree, impudently looking down upon us from safe distances, their tails arched and their small, black eyes shining out like beads in a setting of brown fur.

Presently we reached an arm of the sea, where we should have to be ferried to the opposite shore, the small watering-place of Bénodet. It possesses a great deal of quiet beauty much appreciated by the people of Quimper, who come here in the summer to bathe and boat, and revive themselves after the close confinement of the town.

The ferry-boat was on the other side of the broad sheet of water. It took the men some time to collect themselves, and then they very slowly and deliberately came over, the whole thing being rather a clumsy and primitive arrangement. Horses and carriage were got on board with some difficulty, and we commenced our perilous voyage, feeling like Robinson Crusoe embarking upon his raft.

It is a very lovely spot. Out to the right the sea opened up, and the sun flashed and shimmered upon the water. White-winged pleasure boats flitted about the bay; further away fishing boats were putting out to sea. Before us rose picturesque Bénodet, rapidly becoming a compromise between a village and a fashionable watering-place. The arm of water stretched far up to the left, and the shore, sloping steeply, was splendidly wooded with pine trees.

The men made slow progress with their oars and their long poles, but at length the further shore was reached, and everything was landed with the same cautious movement. The horses, glad to return to their own element, set off briskly, and about five o'clock we passed through Fouesnant, a small town celebrated throughout Finistère for the beauty of its women. They are, however, equally

celebrated for their flirting propensities. H. C. roused up as we passed through the streets, and arranged himself for conquest, but all to no purpose ; streets and windows were deserted. We soon turned into a rough, narrow lane bordered by high hedges, leading to the sea. So rough and steep the road, that once or twice we narrowly escaped being overturned ; but nothing daunted our little driver, who grew quite excited as we neared our destination.

"We approach," he cried. "Ah ! Beg-Meil ! it is the loveliest spot in Brittany."

It had need be something after this perilous descent.

At last, through the trees, the lovely sheet of water opened up, calm and beautiful under the evening sky. In a few moments we were almost on a level with the sea, and, entering an enclosure, half farm-yard, half court-yard, drew up at the door of the inn.

A new building, chiefly of wood, light and airy and clean-looking, and we were taken with it at once. The house reminded us of some of the Norwegian "stations," and seemed almost as solitary and out of the world. We had evidently done well to come. The landlady gave us a delightfully homely greeting, took us under her wing without ceremony, and led the way to her best rooms. We had the whole place to ourselves, and absolute freedom ; everything was perfect in its simplicity.

"This is paradise," said H. C. "I have not felt so happy since I came to Brittany. Let us stay here a month."

It really seemed an earthly paradise. The inn was surrounded by a wild and picturesque garden, and a few feet of rapid descent brought us to the beach, where the waves broke and plashed upon the sandy shore. It is only a broad arm of the sea—the Baie de la Forest, as it is called—and on the further side rose the shores of Concarneau.

Hitherto, Beg-Meil has been nothing but a semaphore station : a small telegraph office at the Point taking note of the movement upon the water. On this side the shore has been wild and desolate, uninhabited. But now that an hotel has been built, it will presently become popular and well known ; will grow into a watering-place, and lose its charm.

To-day, we were thoroughly sensible of the charm of this complete retirement from the world. Before us stretched the bay, the broad sea itself opening out to the right. On the opposite shore, Concarneau and all the well-known, well-frequented coast ; a fair wind and a small sailing boat would have taken us over within the hour, and spared us the long round by land we should have on the morrow.

Below the hotel, a long strip of down stretched away to the right, at the very end of which stood the telegraph station ; a huge dolmen near it might have been a giant's grave, but was only another Druidical remain. Brittany was evidently a favourite land of theirs, and unless the climate has much changed, they must have been a sad people, loving rainy days and grey skies.

Merely to wander about these downs and feel them all our own was exquisite enjoyment. The colouring of land and water was strangely beautiful. At the point flat shelving rocks stretched out, and the sea plashed and frothed gently around them. It was a perfectly still evening, scarcely a cloud in the sky. The lowering sun poured a flood of light upon the water, which was caught up and returned in a myriad flashes. Quite an army of small fishing-boats lay between us and the horizon—the fishing fleet of Concarneau.

We thought we would send a message into the world: perhaps the first private message that had ever gone out from Beg-Meil. The men were so inexperienced they even did not know what to charge.

"You must give us what you think right," said they; "we are never asked to dispatch messages. Few people come here, and no one ever telegraphs."

"Do you not find it slow work and dull, always living here without change?" we asked.

"No," one of them replied; "we have work enough in our occupation; and in our leisure we fish, or dig our garden, or go up to Fouesnant. The time passes quickly, except in winter, when the nights are long and dark and the days are short. Even then we make the best of it. We can always get removed after a certain time."



HARVEST-TIME IN BRITTANY.

We felt that if our lines had been cast here, we should never want to be removed. It was civilization in a lovely desert; for when we went back to the inn, prepared for a modest repast, we found that we fared sumptuously. In this out-of-the-world spot it seemed incredible. Dinner was served in the verandah, within sight and sound of the sea, whilst the trees immediately about us kept up a gentle murmur. The maid who waited of course wore a very becoming Brittany cap, that indispensable touch to the picturesque in these latitudes. The bottled cider was better than the best of champagne, and H. C. endeavoured to enter into a contract whereby large supplies should be exported for his own immediate use in his Yorkshire shooting-box. But there were too many difficulties in the way and the idea fell through. So he made the very most of the present opportunity, and presently asked the landlady whether it would be possible to get up a minuet in the establishment, and would she favour him with her hand. In the season, she replied, it would be quite easy, and many a lady would be glad to honour him; but to-night if he wanted to dance, he would be reduced to executing a pas seul. This did not suit him, and again the idea fell through.

We went out whilst the afterglow still lingered in the sky. It all seemed more lovely than ever, more calm and peaceful, more full of a tone and colouring not to be described. Darkness fell upon sea and land; the stars came out, large and flashing; a crescent moon went down in the west; the steady light gleaming from the telegraph station was the only evidence of life about us.

The windows of our rooms looked on to the sloping garden and the lovely sea, all very bright and visible the next morning, when we rose early and wandered down to the point. The sun had risen before us, and the air was fresh and sparkling. So also was the water that flashed and swirled about the rocks. Boats that had been toiling all night were making for Concarneau. The downs, green and undulating, looked desolate. We and the telegraph men had them all to ourselves.

When we returned to the inn Madame had prepared coffee in great bowls, and hot galettes that she had purposely made for us—a feast for a monarch.

“You ought to stay here at least a week,” she said, “if you wish to know how the place grows upon you. Last year I had two ladies from Russia during the whole summer, and every day they declared they liked it better. Just now we have too little to do, when it becomes more known we shall have too much. But I like to be busy and to go to bed feeling that I have earned my rest. One sleeps the better for it.”

A long day was before us, and soon after breakfast we started for Concarneau. The little driver beamed as usual, and rejoiced that he had not overpraised Beg-Meil. We felt that we owed him a debt of gratitude, for certainly but for him we should never have known

anything about it. The unexpected had, perhaps, had something to do with our delight in these undiscovered charms.

We mounted the rough lane and passed through Fouesnant. Again, to H. C.'s disappointment, the beauties hid themselves as effectually as if they had belonged to a harem, and we passed away to enjoy the less capricious beauties of nature.

One or two picturesque villages broke the monotony of the journey ; and on the road we passed a good many country people. It was evidently market-day somewhere. Many were dressed in costume, and the way we had to return salutations, and good wishes offered in the unknown tongue, made our drive difficult as a royal progress.

It came to an end. From an elevated position we saw before us the grey roofs of Concarneau, the fortifications, the port and its shipping, and the lovely, shimmering sea beyond all. A short, quick descent, and we came to an anchor before the rather homely-looking hotel on the port, in front of the grey walls of the old town.

For Concarneau is a town within a town : the New town and the Old or Close town, as it is called. The latter is strongly fortified with bastions, gateways and drawbridges, surrounded by the sea at high water. The grey walls are massive and formidable, some portions dating back to the fourteenth century, but all useless and unnecessary in the present day. The town within the walls consists of one long, crooked street, a few narrow courts, or *ruelles*, branching right and left. None of the beauties of antiquity will be found here. Enclosed in the high walls the atmosphere is hot and unwholesome, whilst the people themselves have little to recommend them. From the new town the aspect of the old town is very striking. The walls, gateways, drawbridges, the inflowing sea—all contribute to form a very unusual scene ; but once within the walls the charm disappears. We had heard much of the quaintness of the old town, and were disappointed.

On the other hand, the new town more than realised our expectations. It was bright and full of life and sparkle and movement. Every year adds to its prosperity, and the people look animated and enterprising. The port forms quite a harbour of refuge, into which large vessels and even men-of-war may enter. The position of the town is very striking. There is width and breadth about it, whilst the houses are light and cheerful-looking. The place has the appearance rather of an overgrown village, with its unpretending buildings and its sense of freedom and unconventionality.

Beyond the port lies the harbour, and gazing down upon it from the heights at the head of the pier, we felt all the charm of a very dazzling scene. The tide came rolling gently in between the piers, and the sun poured his hot rays upon all. Innumerable boats, white-winged or brown-sailed, were coming in and going out—the fishing fleet of Concarneau, which numbers upwards of five hundred small vessels, and gives work to thirteen thousand men. Beyond all

stretched the lovely Baie de la Forest, so called from the forest of trees that lined the shores, and still line them in many places, down to the very water's edge, where they stoop and kiss their reflections. Across the bay was Beg-Meil, and with our glasses we plainly discerned the telegraph station, the downs and the inn, and fancied we saw our landlady in the verandah gazing across at Concarneau, possibly wondering whether we had arrived there.

The jetty, at the head of which we stood, was a scene of the liveliest character. The lighthouse close at hand was surrounded by the most picturesque women and girls dressed in charming costumes, and sitting in rows, most of them knitting. But the moment we tried to photograph them they all rushed up and tore away, as if the camera had been a deadly weapon. There was great screaming and laughter, and some of the older women chided them for what they called their folly. It had no effect upon them; they would not be taken—perhaps for some superstitious reason about which we felt it would be useless to enquire.

A long flight of steps led down to a large stone landing-stage, for which some of the boats coming into the harbour were making. It was crowded with fishwives pressing round them with empty baskets. A Babel was going on, and every woman's life might have depended upon her getting a full supply. To-day the harvest was abundant. Seeing us coming down with our small camera, they placed themselves in attitudes, each more eager than the other to be taken, each fighting for the front place. There was neither shyness nor superstition about them, as there had been about the younger women. The whole scene formed a singular and striking picture, and was very amusing.

The men in the boats were brown and weatherbeaten, husbands and sons of the crowding fishwives. As each woman's basket was filled she marched up the steps in triumph, her sabots echoing. It was all very opposite to yesterday's experience. Beg-Meil had been a perfect example of still life, almost of desolation; nothing could be more crowded and animated than the haven of Concarneau. Each scene was good in its place.

Our inn itself was homely, but comfortable. The dining-room was made interesting and picturesque by a series of small sketches painted by different artists who had stayed there. Many of them were more than excellent, and some were by men who had become famous in the world. The landlady, obliging and decidedly in advance of her neighbourhood, was ready to change us any amount of English money into French, thereby releasing us from what would have been a serious embarrassment. There was a sad air about her, as if she found the struggle of life a little too much for her. She was still young and had two small children, who were evidently to her "*la pluie et le beau temps*."

"Life is hard," she said, as she placed some French money in our hands in exchange for English. "I have found it so ever since I



A SCENE IN ENGLAND

lost my husband last year. This place is difficult for a woman to manage. I have never a moment to myself by day, and half my nights are passed in anxious thought for the future."

"Yet you seem to be doing well," we remarked.

"I am fairly prosperous," she replied; "but I am one of those who are over anxious; it is a bad thing, I know, and not right, but it is my temperament—*que voulez-vous?* Tell me," she said, as she handled some of the crisp English paper, "are there any false notes in England?"

"Yes," we returned, "but they are not very common, and we can assure you that these are genuine."

"I don't doubt it," she laughed; "but there are others who come to me sometimes whose faces are not exactly passports to one's favour. I never quite know what to do on those occasions. You are more than honest, for you have given me a note too many."

It was true. We had left H. C. to count them out, and instead of applying himself to the task, he had been studying Madame's pensive eyes and modulated tones, and feasting his gaze upon a wonderful Brittany cap, all lace and mysterious details, that the waiting maid was wearing. It gave her quite a refined and charming appearance.

"It is the custom of the country," said our landlady in answer to his remark. "Concarneau is noted for its pretty caps."

"And its pretty women, no doubt," returned H. C. "I should like to buy a cap as a curiosity. It would tell wonderfully in a picture."

"Nothing more easy," returned Madame. "Maria," to the maid, "would you sell your cap to this gentleman?"

"Mais oui," replied Maria. "I made it; I can make another. But I have a better upstairs, more worth taking to England. It is my Sunday cap."

And in a few moments she came down with it in her hand. H. C. examined it critically.

"I prefer the one you have on," he said at last. "Perhaps the face beneath it makes it look so much more picturesque than this one."

"Pray don't turn her head with idle compliments," reproved Madame, laughing. "They are quite silly and vain enough as it is."

"He is a charming gentleman, Madame," said Maria, blushing very prettily. "Do not chide him for his little flatteries. I am quite used to being told that I am pretty; I assure you it has no effect upon me—*du reste* I quite see it for myself. As for the cap, monsieur," turning to H. C., "if you prefer the one I have on, you shall have it. By chance I put it on fresh this morning. It is all made and washed and goffed with my own hands."

And without further ceremony she went up to a mirror, took off the cap she was wearing, and put on the other. It seemed a fright-

fully complicated affair, and H. C. was so long learning the mysteries of the folds under Maria's instructions, that for once I thought him obtuse. At length Madame took the lesson into her own hands, and all stupidity immediately vanished. Maria was handsomely rewarded, and H. C. became possessor of the treasure.

"You ought to like Concarneau," said Madame, as she neatly folded the cap into a small box. "It was once occupied by the English; and although it is as far back as 1373, I feel as if their traces still remained. It is true, I hardly know where or how. Du Guesclin laid siege to it—rather a terrible siege, I believe, and in the end it surrendered. The English are not often vanquished," she politely added, "but starvation is a foe the strongest must yield to."

"Was it never retaken by the English?" asked H. C.

"Never. It was hardly worth the trouble. In 1488 de Rohan half destroyed it by command of Charles VIII. Then de Rieux retook it from the French in 1489, and rebuilt all the fortifications. At that time it was nothing but a stronghold for the robbers and murderers in the country; but in 1557, it rose into note, and was the fourth fortified town in Brittany."

"We are disappointed in the part of the old town," said H. C.

"So is everyone," returned Madame quickly. "From these windows it is imposing, and I have heard artists rave about the tone of the walls and the splendour of the masonry; but once over the drawbridge, all charm disappears. It is close, ugly and unhealthy. I must say that the granite ramparts are magnificent, and I love to see the sea rolling in and filling that immense moat. The largest bastion is attributed to the Queen Anne, and so is the immense well, which I daresay escaped your notice. The north gate is called *la Porte aux Vins*, because all the wine that comes to Concarneau by sea is unloaded there."

"It is altogether very interesting," said H. C.; "perhaps the most picturesque seaport in Brittany. You need have no anxiety about the future. Artists will always come here, and they alone would fill your house a great part of the year."

"I don't know," sighed Madame. "So many of them rush off to Pont-Aven. It really is not half so picturesque as Concarneau, though it may be more rural. And then I find that nine artists out of ten want everything for nothing. Either they are very poor, or they are great spendthrifts elsewhere, for when they get to Concarneau they have very little left in their purses. But I am glad you think our town interesting."

We had also found at least one interesting person in the town, whom we had discovered through a misunderstanding. It happened as follows:

We had been told that a certain Monsieur X. possessed the most wonderful collection of old curiosities in Brittany, any of which he was willing to part with: in short, that he made it his trade.

"Monsieur X. exists well enough," said the landlady, when we had inquired about him earlier in the day; "but I am not aware of his selling curiosities. However, as it is not far from here, you can do no harm by inquiring."

We followed her directions, which led us just beyond the more crowded part of the town into streets that were half country; where houses, few and far between, reposed in large gardens, surrounded by palings or substantial walls. It was all as complete a picture of still life as the neighbourhood of the harbour was the opposite.

At length we reached Monsieur X.'s gate, and boldly rang. A high wall surrounded a large garden, at the upper end of which stood a wide, low, picturesque house. A Brittany maid, in an inevitable Brittany cap, came flying down the paths in answer to our summons. Yes; M. X. was at home; would we give ourselves the trouble to enter.

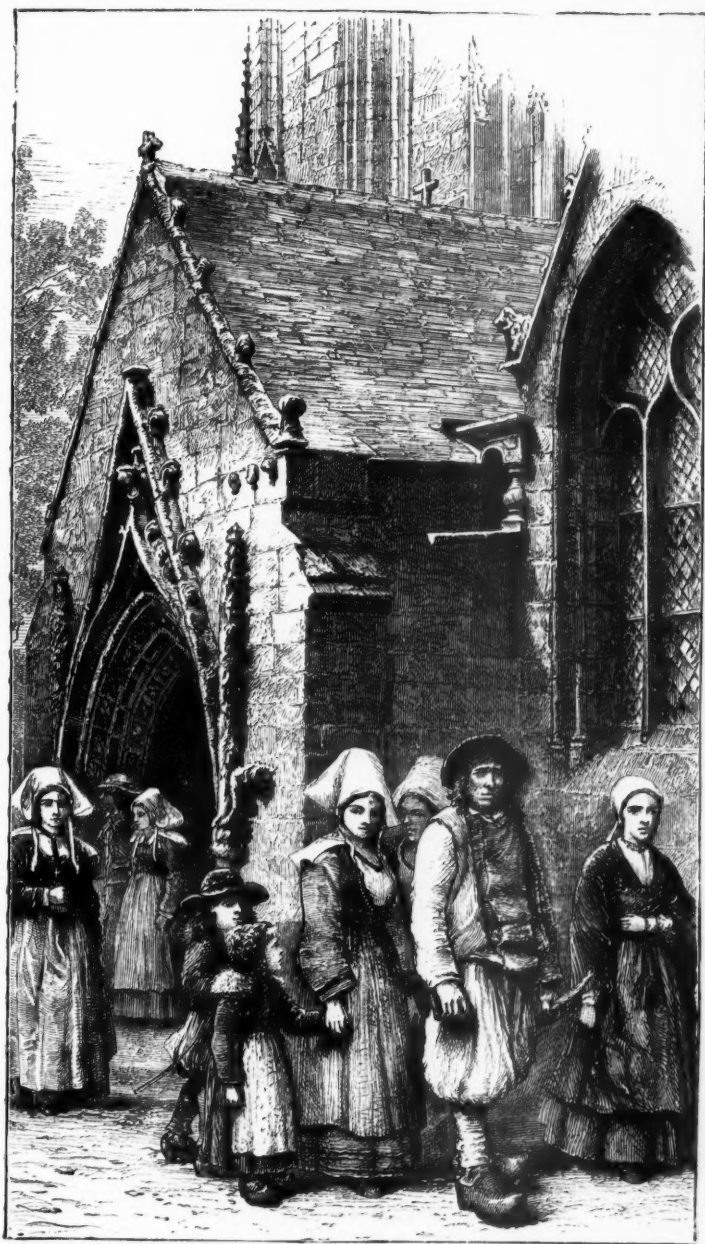
She conducted us through the garden at a more sober pace, and we had time to admire the beauty and order of everything; the lovely old-fashioned flowers that adorn so many of the Breton gardens, and fill the air with fragrance. Somehow we felt that we had made a mistake; there was nothing of a commercial element about the place; it seemed essentially the abode of a man of taste and cultivation and of leisure moments.

We felt this still more upon entering the house. The rooms were low and large. Beams ran across the ceilings. Latticed panes gave a quaintness to the view without, and accorded well with the old-fashioned garden. The rooms were panelled with oak long black with age, and one unpanelled room was hung with excellent pictures. Rare old cabinets of carved woodwork adorned the rooms, whilst ancient silver and other ornaments added to their beauty. The house was distinguished by a mediæval atmosphere full of charm and repose and the calmness of life. One felt in another world, a by-gone age.

Presently the owner entered, and received us with great courtesy, with a certain old-world bearing that accorded well with his surroundings. We explained that we feared our visit was due to a misapprehension, and hoped he would not look upon us as intruders.

"On the contrary," he returned with a very polite bow and in very genuine tones; "I have a great partiality for Englishmen and it gives me much pleasure to receive you. I do not know how the report has spread abroad, but many others have come to me in the same way. My servant generally finds out the mistake, and the callers do not come in. They ask her point blank whether this is not an old curiosity shop and I a dealer in the same, and she is not pleased. I am glad the error was not explained in your instance," he politely added.

"The very sound of your bell, the very calmness and repose of your house and garden told us we had been misinformed," we replied.



SUNDAY IN BRITTANY.

"All we could do was to ask very humbly for an audience and explain our error in person."

"Whereby you much impressed my maiden," laughed Monsieur X., "who hurried to my atelier—I spend many of my leisure hours in painting—with the information that 'distinguished visitors' awaited me in the dining-room. I fear that too often those who call under the misapprehension, treat her a little brusquely. It may be partly the result of vexation and disappointment, but it must be admitted that the *suaviter* in *modo* of the past generation is not the *cachet* of most of the travellers of the present. Travelling was once my greatest pleasure, but I confess that after each fresh journey, be it long or short, I am more discontented with the crushing and crowding, the loudness of my fellow-pilgrims, and I appreciate more than ever the repose and seclusion of my little *pied-à-terre*."

"It could hardly be otherwise," we returned. "You would find it difficult to equal the charms of your home: of this fine collection, this old-world atmosphere, so full of a subdued refinement. We should indeed have lost much if our courage had failed and we had departed without seeing you. Such a collection is rare."

"It is the collection of a good many years," said Monsieur X. "I began thirty years ago, and in those days there was much to be found for the seeking. Brittany was almost unknown; few foreigners dreamed of paying us a visit; fewer still of collecting our *bric-a-brac* and rare old carvings. Thirty years ago a fortune might have been made in a very short time; it is all over now. From the north of Finistère to the south of Morbihan hardly anything remains to be discovered."

"And those who have their collections wisely keep them," we observed.

"Indeed, yes," returned Monsieur X. warmly. "They ought to become heirlooms. Every true collection should be looked upon as a 'monument historique.' Our little country has lost too many of its treasures. As it is, when some one dies and leaves no direct heir, or some great name becomes bankrupt, a sale takes place, and the labour and love of a century is scattered in an hour. I do not, for a moment, speak of such a collection as mine," he modestly added. "What I have is no doubt good, but like the size of my house it is limited. I allude to those collections that have become famous and are worth the trouble of a long journey. There are not many left."

Much more was said as he led us from room to room, and, on taking leave, escorted us through his garden at a very leisurely pace, plucking sweet marjoram and verbena for us as we sauntered down the paths.

"Pray let us renew our acquaintance if ever you return to Concarneau," he said very cordially, as we shook hands at the outer gate. "I find that people do visit it a second time. It is very bright and

picturesque, and the coup-d'œil of its harbour has few rivals. Here, at any rate, a welcome will await you. And though I am not a dealer in old curiosities," he laughed, "I may have a slight mania for them; but that is another and a costlier matter. A rivederci!"

Altogether, when the afternoon sun was declining, and we set out towards Quimper, we felt that our visit to this quaint old town had been a great, though too short success. Our landlady of the *Hôtel des Voyageurs* hoped we should return, begged us to recommend her. She declared that if we spent a week in Concarneau, we should only the more regret the end of our stay.

The drive back to Quimper was interesting and diverse. The road was lively with many people and carts—quaint carts and quaint costumes—most of them returning from Quimper to their various farms and villages. Occasionally we met an old woman driving a cow or a pig, and the Breton animals seemed to rival the Irish in obstinacy. Many brooks crossed our path and made musical the air. Near a dense wood we passed the old Commandery of the Moustoir, dating back to the thirteenth century. At last, as the shades of evening were beginning to gather, the skies to deepen in tone, the grey roofs of Quimper opened up in the distance, and rising above them like a beautiful vision, the spires of the cathedral pointed heavenwards. We thought of the Canon and Adrien, of a bygone delightful evening; and we wondered whether the grey look on the face of old André, the Suisse, had been a prophetic shadow.



SONNET.

From the Portuguese of Camoens.

"Mudaô-se os têpos, mudaô-se as vôtades."

THE times change on, the dreams we loved to build,
Our being's self, our trust in others' truth—
All suffer change. The universe, in sooth,
Is formed of changes! and we see it filled
With endless novelty; but unfulfilled
Remain the visions once by Hope designed.
Evil leaves poignant memories behind;
Good (if it has been) yearnings never stilled.
Where the cold snow-flakes lay, a verdant fold
The hand of Time has laid, and my sweet song
I turn to mourning, dreading to behold,
Besides the changes of each passing day,
Another change more terrible and strong—
That nothing changes as it did of old!

ANNA H. DRURY.

MISS EDITH'S CONQUEST.

BY INA GARVEY.

THE ostensible motive for setting the bazaar project on foot was to make up the fund necessary to build new schools for Upstead Parish Church, the church scholars being in the unpleasant predicament of pursuing their studies in such a crazy old place that it threatened each day to tumble down and crush the young students as they gathered the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

That was the *ostensible* reason for holding the Upstead Bazaar and Fancy Fair.

But traitors in the Upstead camp whispered that there was another reason—even a mightier one—for getting up that bazaar, viz., to give the young ladies of Upstead an opportunity for displaying ravishing toilettes and enjoying unlimited flirtation.

And, of a surety, the zeal which the Upstead fair ones showed in promoting the bazaar, in working articles for it, in buying articles for it, in making numberless journeys to Burlington, the nearest large town, on missions connected with it, in meeting perpetually at one another's houses and discussing it as their needles flew: that zeal, I say, was greater than one would have expected such giddy young things to manifest only in the cause of education and with the object of "elevating the masses."

"Those poor dear school-children!" cried Flossie Middleton, of the Grange. "Of course they must have a new schoolroom. Oh, what fun the bazaar will be! What a lovely dress I shall have for it! I quite love those children for wanting a schoolroom!"

The weather was lovely summer. The bazaar was to be held in the large grounds of Upstead Rectory. The three Miss Simpsons, the Rector's daughters, naturally occupied a prominent place among the promoters. And for visitors to the bazaar? Oh, the Upstead ladies had no fear that there would be any lack of visitors. It was to be but a one-day affair (an improvement in that respect upon most of its kind); and though Upstead was but a small place, was not Burlington three miles off? And was not Burlington a garrison town? Were not those dashing fellows, the Royal Scots Carbineers, quartered there? And might they not be seen any morning of the week marching through its streets, with their bagpipes playing, on their way to drill outside the town, and marching back to barracks at mid-day? And were not the young ladies of Burlington constantly exercised in their minds whether to admire the elegant and gallant officers of the Carbineers most as they marched through the streets with their men in the mornings, in all the fascinations of military braiding and

shouldered weapon ; or as, later in the day, they lounged in the same streets in mufti, with their high, snow-white collars, perfectly-fitting clothes, killing hats and heart-breaking little canes ? Burlington had promised to support the Upstead bazaar—that is to say, the most important part of Burlington, the Royal Scots Carbineers, had promised. “Oh, they would certainly come. Most happy to do anything to help.” The young ladies of Upstead went on working for the bazaar, and talking of it, and buying for it ; and at last the time for opening it drew near. And, lo ! they could think of no one to perform that ceremony.

“We must have a Personage to open it,” said the young ladies. “A titled Personage, if possible. It will be a failure if not properly opened !”

But every one of importance for miles round happened to be away ; failure seemed inevitable, and all the fair promoters went into mourning.

But suddenly their mourning was turned to the liveliest joy. For the Earl of Peterscourt arrived on a visit to his place near Upstead. Upstead knew him not, for it was his first visit to Peterscourt since his accession, some months before, to the title—but it knew *of* him.

As a matter of fact, he was young, single, rich, a peer : as a matter of faith, he was handsome, charming, delightful, talented, the glass of fashion and the mould of form. He arrived at Peterscourt, near Upstead. A daring spirit on the Bazaar Committee suggested : “Ask him to open it.” He was asked, humbly and respectfully, in a Committee letter in which the object of the bazaar and the perilous position of the parish school-children was dwelt on. He consented, in a polite note, to their request, and the Committee fell into raptures.

It was the day before the Grand Bazaar and Fancy Fair to be held in the grounds of Upstead Rectory.

At about five in the afternoon Miss Edith Brunton, one of the leading spirits of Upstead and among the most zealous of the bazaar promoters, was in the drawing-room of Hazlewood Villa. Mrs. Brunton, an elderly widow, and of late years a confirmed invalid, lay on her sofa near one of the windows. Beatrice Brunton, nine or ten years older than Edith, sat working at the other window. This was the whole family—considered very nice people in Upstead, where they had lived a year and more.

The disparity in years between Beatrice and Edith was accounted for by Mrs. Brunton having lost three children, who had come between them, in infancy. Her husband had held a high military command in India, and the fatal climate had withered the three baby lives.

“Well, mamma and Beatrice, so you really think I shall do ? You think I shall make a useful and attractive stall-holder ? It doesn't much matter, though, whether you think so or not—for the mirror tells me the same.” And Edith Brunton twirled round and dropped

a low curtsy to her lovely reflection in the glass. "That's the best of a fancy fair; you may put on anything you've a mind to and not look conspicuous or out of place."

The dress she wore was an exquisite Indian silk, light and soft as gauze, made artistically with a sacque back; and with her great, fantastic plumed hat, she certainly was a wonderful picture.

"Frank Lyndon says he knows he shall spend all his money at my stall," she laughed; "but he needn't be frightened; I shall waste very little of my sweetness on him and his brother-officers; there'll be higher game to bring down."

"Fie, Edith!" exclaimed Mrs. Brunton languidly. "You let your spirits run away with you, my darling. What *do* you mean?"

"Mamma, you know well enough what I mean. You know Lord Peterscourt opens the bazaar; I think it not improbable that the cigar-divan under my care may prove attractive to his lordship."

"What nonsense you talk, child," said her mother, looking admiringly at her.

"You know you don't *really* think so, mamma. You know you quite approve of my having registered a solemn vow to make a captive of Lord Peterscourt. As I said yesterday to Julia Croker, it is my turn now. Beatrice had her turn; a much jollier one than will fall to my share; years ago in India, when papa was alive and we were rich and important. Beattie had the gayest of times then, and might have carried out her career brilliantly. I was a small child in England in those days, but I wish *my* turn had come then—or that those days could come again. I think it's very hard that *my* turn came when papa had died, and mamma had turned immovable."

"I would rather you did not discuss me with Julia Croker or anyone else," said Beatrice, with gentle dignity, looking up from some embroidery she was finishing.

"Oh, dear me! I have no wish to discuss you, I'm sure! You're quite sufficiently in my way as it is. I often think it's a little hard for a girl to have to go about with a sister so much older than she is. It makes people think *me* older than I am. Just fancy! You are twenty-eight—quite an old maid!"

Beatrice said nothing. She rose, stepped through the open French window, and went away into the garden with her work.

"There goes my lady in a temper, I suppose," said Edith.

"I think, my darling," remarked the doting mother, "that you tease Beatrice a good deal about her age."

"Of course, I am always in the wrong! I wish I'd had half the chances *she's* had. When she had so many opportunities years ago in India in papa's time, she might have established herself splendidly, and been a help to me now. Instead of which she's only a hindrance to my prospects—an old-maid sister! And all because she chose to set her heart on a poor lieutenant in the Lancers, who presumed to fall in love with General Brunton's

daughter. Was Archie Milroy so very handsome, mamma?" asked Miss Edith presently, tapping on the window-pane with the tips of her fingers, and looking out into the garden.

"I believe he was considered so—but there, don't speak to me of that wretched affair, child. I'm not strong enough to bear mortifying reminiscences. I only wish that foolish girl had never seen him." And Mrs. Brunton sniffed at her vinaigrette.

"Well, mamma, I'm going to make up to you for Beattie's foolishness and obstinacy. You shall have *one* daughter a credit to you. If Lord Peterscourt is like the generality of his sex, he shall not leave the Fancy Fair heart-whole to-morrow evening."

She was certainly a beautiful creature. The exquisite material and artistic shape of her gown set off her graceful figure to the utmost: the great hat, with its smoke-like floating feathers, seemed to heighten every charm of the fair face, with its large brown eyes, and its framing of rich, curling, golden-brown hair.

"And now I must run and take off my finery, or it won't look fresh to-morrow!" And she disappeared from the room.

After what we have just heard, it is scarcely necessary to premise that Edith Brunton was selfish, vain and ill-natured. She was, in truth, one of those who, not content with possessing Nature's choicest gifts, must needs try to aggravate the unhappy lot of such of her sex as did not possess them. Out in the full sunshine herself, she was not satisfied unless she had increased the discomfort of those who sat in the gloomy, chilly shade. Her own sex in general dreaded her. With her great beauty of face and form, her cleverness, her capacity for saying the cruellest and most cutting things, her overweening and aggressive vanity, she was one before whom most young women struck their colours; and though hating her, they must do it silently, for hatred of a beauty is bad form, and always gets set down to jealousy.

What a contrast was Beatrice Brunton to her sister! Tall, stately, dark-haired Beatrice, with her handsome pale face and deep-blue eyes. Even in the first flush of her youth, admired and courted, she had been so kind and gentle—had never cared to triumph meanly over her plainer friends. "Not so clever as Edith," had long been the verdict on her, and she had accepted it quietly and meekly. Not that Beatrice Brunton was wanting in spirit. Years ago her father and mother had had but too strong proofs to the contrary. Those were the days when Beatrice was surrounded with admirers. Gay times those. Beatrice, a blooming beauty in her teens—Edith, a little child in England with her aunts—times in which fair Beattie never dreamed of later days in which an upstart sister, grown to womanhood herself, should gibe and goad at her as "an old maid."

And out of all her crowd of admirers Archie Milroy, a young Lieutenant in the Lancers, had won her heart. Archie, who, though well-connected, had nothing in the world but his good looks, his

manly, faithful heart, and his slender pay, had dared to fall in love with General Brunton's beautiful daughter. He was sent to the right-about by the General—an ambitious, worldly man—in such a fashion, that he was not likely to renew the attack. Only two more of those countless loving hearts that have been torn apart by Mammon.

But though they could drive poor Beatrice's chosen lover away, they could not force her to take one to their liking. In spite of their anger and their reproaches, she persisted in refusing the most advantageous offers. When General Brunton's health failed, and the family came to England, Beatrice felt that her last hope of seeing Archie again was gone. The General had a six months' leave—but he took a much longer one, for he died in England. And the family's palmiest days died with him—a fact much fretted over afterwards by Miss Edith as most unfair to herself. Mrs. Brunton had a fairly good property of her own, and the General had some small private means: they were still very comfortably off. Mrs. Brunton, always a delicate woman, had been quite an invalid for the last few years. She required much nursing and assiduous attention, and this all fell to Beatrice.

"Beattie is fitted for that sort of thing," said Edith; or, if she did not say it in so many words, thought it and acted it. "She doesn't feel it as she would if she were ten years younger. As she hasn't married, she must expect to have all that sort of thing to do. I have my career to make—it's not likely I'm going to lose my complexion and spoil my nerves waiting on an invalid—of course mamma wouldn't wish it. No—Beattie had her turn years ago in India—it's *my* turn now, a poor one enough compared with hers—but such as it is I must make the very most of it."

And so she went out and about, accepted this invitation and that, stayed with friends as often as they would have her—and left tall, stately, gentle Beatrice to do all the home-duties and to attend upon the mother whose thoughts were always with her darling Edith.

Beatrice was good and uncomplaining, and bore the burden of a life that must have been unhappy, very bravely. But there were times when her heart failed a little—and the night before the Grand Bazaar and Fancy Fair was one of these. Edith had been particularly trying to her all day—particularly rude and insulting; and the vain, bold speeches about the expected conquest of this much-talked-of Lord Peterscourt at to-morrow's bazaar had been almost intolerable to bear in silence.

"If she were married and away—if only she were married and away!" thought Beatrice, as she sat at her window that night and looked out into the summer darkness. "I am afraid it is wrong to feel so to a sister; but I seem sometimes as if I could not stand it much longer."

She sat musing at the window for some time—then rose and went

to a small writing-case on a table, unlocked it, and from a private drawer drew a slip of paper which she gazed on long and sadly. How well she remembered the finding, in a bouquet, of that little slip of paper—the only memento she possessed of her time of love and happiness—and the fluttering of heart it caused her. There had been a little coolness between the as-yet-unconfessed lovers—a dance too many given to a rival, or some such trifle, its foundation—and when the flowers came she searched amongst them for a message, and her heart leapt as she discovered the note.

“Will you bring these flowers to the ball to-night? I shall know then that I am forgiven.” Surely that time is not gone! She is still at the ball—the crash and wail of the brass music in her ears, the measured tread of the waltzers, and the rustle and sweep of the dresses: and she is flying round with the crowd, her nineteen-year-old heart throbbing with life and joy, her hand on some one’s shoulder, and some one’s dear voice whispering, “How can I thank you for bringing my flowers, and ending my misery by forgiving me?”

No, no; that night is gone, indeed; buried beneath many a hard, lonely year. The joyful girl-heart has long been a sorrowful one; the brightness of the girl-beauty is dimmed; and it is a pale, sad Beatrice that bends over that well-worn slip of paper and cries as she presses her lips to it: “Archie—Archie! they were cruel to part us! We might have been so happy!”

The Bazaar was in full swing. The grounds of Upstead Rectory were large and pretty. The principal stalls—lightly rigged-up canvas affairs—were in a long row; others were dotted about separately. Here were the three Miss Simpsons at the refreshment stall, driving a better trade than Miss Edith Brunton predicted they would do. Here was Miss Flossie Middleton from the Grange, dispensing, with the aid of three coadjutors, cut flowers, button-holes, bouquets, plants in pots and brilliant smiles to all and sundry. Here was Miss Ledbury, a “Church-worker,” indefatigable and undaunted, with a flopping hat and spectacles, presiding over a stall of needlework, and somewhat ignored by the mass of the visitors. Here was Mrs. Harding, the doctor’s wife, at her stall of toys, assisted by her two little girls. Here were many other stalls full of articles that no one ever could possibly require. Here, last, but not least, was the little cigar-divan whose chief presiding goddess was Edith Brunton; and here was Edith in the midst of her enjoyment and her triumph. All day the divan had been thronged with customers, and she had chattered and laughed with them to her own and their heart’s content. But now—now, she had ears and eyes for none save one; now might the gay youths who stood round her counter draw off in despair. A good-looking young man, dressed quietly but stylishly, had just purchased from her the daintiest of cigarette-cases, embroidered with

forget-me-nots by her own hand and filled with the choicest "Khedives." He had given her a five-pound note in payment and declined any change; and she, in a flutter of joy and triumph over her last and longed-for conquest, was saying in soft tones, with the dark eye-lashes showing off to full advantage: "If you pay so handsomely for it, Lord Peterscourt, you must let me work your monogram or initials or something on it. I would try to do it very nicely."

The day wore on and the goods went off. In the slack intervals of business, fair stall-holders fled over to each other and compared their "takings." Dear Flossie ran over to dear Edith to ask what the latter's receipts amounted to: and it turning out that dear Edith's takings amounted to a good many pounds more than dearest Flossie's, dearest Flossie was profuse in her loving congratulations; went back to her stall in bitter ire, and was rude to old Dr. Simpson when he asked the price of a small, cheap plant in a pot.

The day wore on and the goods went off. The three Miss Simpsons got rather tired—were a little short with their hungry customers—and were downright hard on the two curates who were helping them, and who had almost paralysed their right arms cutting a great deal more bread-and-butter than was wanted. And as the day wore on and the goods went off, a feeling became rife in the bosoms of several fair shop-keepers that Edith Brunton was an odious girl; that she had set her odious trap to catch that sweet, delightful, handsome Earl of Peterscourt! and, oh, crowning guilt and shame!—that she had succeeded! In which latter opinion, Miss Edith, with a bright, hard, triumphant glance round at them all, and a smile that it maddened them to see and to have to return, fully coincided.

"No, Beatrice. It is no use asking me to go to bed. I must sit up till dear Edith's return. I want to hear all about the bazaar and how the dear child enjoyed herself."

Thus had Mrs. Brunton answered all her elder daughter's entreaties that she would retire, and thus she continued to answer though her bed-time was long past. From time to time she fell asleep on her sofa, and each time, on waking, she was crosser—not with the absent Edith, the cause of her fatigue, but with the good, gentle Beatrice, who had been her companion all day as usual, and for whom a visit to the gay scene in the rectory grounds had not been dreamed of.

At last Edith was heard outside saying good-night to a party of neighbours, and in another moment she had floated, all smiles and flushes and excitement, into the drawing-room.

"What! You two still up? Goodness gracious, Beattie! why didn't mamma go to bed at her usual hour?"

"I wanted to see you, darling, on your return," said the mother, all her crossness and sleepiness vanished. "Tell me all about it, Edith."

Edith tossed off her great plumed hat, and fluttered up and down in front of the mirror, reviewing her charming self and her lovely dress.

"And now for your congratulations," she cried, turning to her mother and sister. "All has gone off brilliantly. I've taken almost double what any of the other stall-holders have. They're all so jealous, and they hate me so, the dear things! And I've had the most glorious day that ever was."

"And—the Earl—was he there?" questioned Mrs. Brunton.

Her daughter laughed gaily. "Yes, indeed! And I shouldn't have said I had had a glorious day if I hadn't taken him captive, bound hand and foot, helpless and at my mercy."

"Edith!" remonstrated the admiring mother. Beatrice went on reading, and did not seem much interested in the account of the day's triumph.

"Mother, it's all true! I've succeeded beyond my hopes. I've sent an arrow straight into his lordship's heart. He came—he saw—but I conquered."

She sat down by her mother's sofa. Her mood was the gayest, and, for once, she seemed inclined to leave Beatrice in peace.

"I don't wonder he admired you, child," said the widow, looking at the brilliant cheeks and eyes of her lovely daughter.

"It's something more than admiration," said the young lady, nodding wisely. "I can see that Lord Peterscourt is not a flirt, like Frank Lyndon or Captain Hansard, and when he seems as much interested in a girl as he was in me from the moment he was introduced, something is pretty sure to come of it. Mamma, we were quite like old friends before we parted. That stupid Lady Adamson had made him promise to dine with them, and carried him off almost by force—I know he hated going! But, as I said, we were like old friends. I found myself telling him all about my affairs—that I had an invalid mother, and a sister a great many years older than myself—and how long we had lived at Upstead, and all about us—and there was he listening and leaning on my counter, and all the girls mad with jealousy. When I asked him how long he meant to stay at Peterscourt, he said, in a dreamy voice, 'I only came for a few days, but I shall stay longer than that now.' And oh, mamma, he's coming to call to-morrow."

"To-morrow! so soon!" exclaimed the mother.

"Yes. He'll come, of course, just about the time for afternoon tea. My programme is this: You, mamma, on your sofa (he knows you're an invalid) in your best dress and cap—the pink-and-gold tea-set on the gipsy-table—Beattie in her lavender cashmere pouring out the tea—me, in one of my white muslin tea-gowns, with the blue let in under the lace insertion, seated gracefully on that sofa by the window, with a dainty piece of work or a book. That is what he is to see when he is shown in. He will bring his tea and sit by me on

the sofa, and we shall keep up the conversation chiefly. You and Beattie can join in from time to time just to support me, you know. And before he goes, mamma, you'll find an opportunity to invite him at an early date. Beattie, you jealous thing; don't pretend, you're absorbed in that book; why don't you look up and take some interest in the day's triumph? Though you're past all this yourself, you might have some sympathy, I should have thought, with my affairs."

"I hardly think you go the right way to win anyone's sympathy, Edith, since you ask me for mine," replied Beatrice.

"Well, I'll not be so stupid as to ask you for yours again. What young girl can expect sympathy from a cross, disappointed old maid?"

Beatrice looked at her quietly. "The unfailing gibe, Edith. Supposed to be the bitterest there is, no doubt, and therefore always chosen. Thinking my lot a particularly hard and hopeless one, you do all in your power to make it more so. Well, it is the way of the world." And Beatrice left the room.

At about ten o'clock the following morning Beatrice Brunton, with gardening gloves on and a large apron over her fresh white morning gown, was in the little greenhouse that opened from the landing above the drawing-room flight of stairs at Hazlewood Villa. The ferns in the greenhouse were her care and pride. As she snipped and clipped and watered, the occupation and movement brought a colour to her beautiful cheek and a lustre to her deep-blue eye; her dark curling hair strayed upon her forehead, and was plaited behind. Never, perhaps, had she looked fairer, even in the flush of her first youth.

A ring came at the bell while she was thus busy; but not heeding it she went on with her work, and was unaware that any visitor had been admitted below. A servant entered the greenhouse and announced Lord Peterscourt. Beatrice looked at her; threw down her gardening implements in astonishment. "Lord Peterscourt!" she ejaculated. "At this hour of the morning! How very strange! Where is Miss Edith?"

"In bed and asleep, miss," answered the maid.

Beatrice went to her sister's room and entered it. Edith lay smiling in her sleep, dreaming, perhaps, of the triumphs of the day before. But when roused and told of the visitor, she became suddenly as wide awake as if her eyes had not been closed for hours.

"Called at this hour of the day! What does he mean by it? What shall I do? If only I were all ready and dressed!" She proceeded rapidly with her toilette. "But to think of his being kept waiting! Beattie, help me at this pinch if you have any sisterly feeling. I know I've been nasty to you at times, but forget it all like a good Christian, and stand by me now. You must go down, introduce yourself to him, and play the benevolent elder sister till I come. Talk to him, you know, in your staid, elderly way. You've quite a

colour this morning," she added, glancing rather grudgingly at the tinge in Beatrice's cheek.

"I've been gardening," said the latter. "I suppose I have no business with a colour," and she laughed a little.

"Nonsense, Beattie! Don't be absurd."

"Well, if I must go down, I hope you'll come soon."

"As soon as ever I can. Thank you, Beattie. By the way, you might leave me that rose in your dress; it would just finish me off, and I haven't time to get one for myself."

Beatrice smiled as she removed the red rose she wore from the body of her white dress, took off her gardening apron, and went downstairs.

She passed softly across the hall, entered the drawing-room, closing the door behind her. The sun-blinds were down before the windows, the room was shady. The summer breeze came in and shook the curtains.

Lord Peterscourt was standing by the table, his back towards her, bending over a photograph album. He had not heard her approach. Beatrice advanced.

"My mother wishes me to ——"

Lord Peterscourt started—stood erect—turned his face to her.

"Archie! Is it—oh! is it *really* Archie?"

But before she had finished asking the wild question, two arms were clasping her close, and then a voice, long unheard, whispered: "Yes, dear and only love! It is Archie, who has found you at last, and is never going to be sent away from you again."

When their agitation and her wonder were a little subsided, she heard his story: How faithful he had been to her whose parents had driven him away from her—how, after she left India and returned with her father and mother to England, he had lost all tidings of her, save a rumour, two years later, of her marriage—how he had felt that no other woman could ever occupy his heart, and that her memory must be his only life-companion—how he had found life but a sorry business, and had half hoped when he served through the Afghan war that the dart so often hurled at his comrades might come his way. And, with regard to the earldom? Well, Archie Milroy had been far enough from it in those old Indian days, but the unexpected deaths of two cousins had made him heir to his great-uncle, the last earl. At the aged nobleman's request, his heir had come to England the preceding winter to pay him a visit; but when Archie arrived at the Earl's town-house in Berkeley Square, he found that his relative had had a stroke of paralysis, to which he succumbed a few days later, and Archie found himself a wealthy peer.

"But what was it all to me," he said, "with a desolate heart. I could only think, 'if this had come years ago, they would have given her to me.' All seemed hollow and empty. I took but small pleasure in my 'honours' as they are called. I had often thought

of cutting the world, and then when I came down to Peterscourt, and the people here asked me to open their bazaar, I sorely wanted to get out of doing it; but they seemed as if they would take no refusal, so I went. And there I saw a face like my lost love's—only not so lovely. It was your sister's. I was introduced to her; from her I learned that my lost darling was found again, and was still mine." (Poor Edith! So this was your boasted conquest!) "Beattie," and he looked tenderly and penetratingly into her violet blue eye, and his hand touched gently the fair cheek, "my gentle, patient love. Perhaps I can guess a little of what you have had to bear."

Beatrice's eyes fell and her cheeks flushed; for it seemed as if he guessed, in some mysterious manner, something of what she had suffered from Edith. She said nothing; only her drooping head lay on his heart; and presently she murmured: "Archie! Archie! have you really come back to me? Oh! the long, sad, lonely years that have come between us—how could I live them?" And her tears rained down for the sorrow that was past as much as for the joy that was present

When Miss Edith fluttered down in her embroidered white frock, with the damask rose she had taken from her sister fastened in the bodice, her great brown eyes bright with excitement, and a smile of the sweetest welcome on her fair face, she received the greatest shock it had ever been her lot to suffer.

Her grand castle in the air, it seemed, had been jerry-built: as she stepped in to take up her abode there, it fell upon her and crushed her—crushed, let us hope, some of the vanity and conceit out of her.

To think that this Earl's interest in her had been merely on account of her relationship to Beattie. To think that Beattie, who had heard all her boasts—Beattie, at whom she had giped and jeered—was going to be the Countess, not herself. To think that—And here, shut into her own room, she broke down, and shed many bitter tears.

I own I am pleased at the picture she makes sitting there weeping—at the mortification she so richly deserved.

HÄNCHEN'S WOOING.

"DO you say that Romance is dead nowadays, and that nobody falls in love at first sight? Oh, no! that may be the case in England, but not in Germany. Did I ever tell you of my Hänchen's wooing? No? Then you shall hear and judge for yourself."

The Frau Doktor straightened herself on her slippery sofa; her blue eyes shone and her wrinkled cheeks took a little colour, like the faint pink of a faded sweet-pea; her thin voice had a note of anticipating triumph.

"All my girls had married," she began, "and married well—all except Hänchen. Ida married her cousin, and Adelheit married his best friend who came to her sister's marriage. Heléne was cut out for a Pfarrer's wife, and took Pastor Schultze six months after his poor wife died (there were so many children he could not wait); and Friedel would have Ernst Crämers and nobody else—they had played together at man and wife ever since they were babies. Then there was only Hänchen left, and she was no beauty. My man would often say to me: 'Be content, Mütterchen; you have married four daughters out of five, and that is a long way over the average'—my man has such a business-like way of talking.

"But all the same I longed for Hänchen to marry. She was not intellectual like Ida, nor beautiful like Adelheit, nor economical like Heléne, nor a regular little witch like Friedel; only, thank God, none of my girls was quite without good looks and quick wits, and I had brought them up to be good managers and to know how to make a man comfortable, which is, after all, the chief charm. Nevertheless, Hänchen was twenty-six and still single.

"Then there came an invitation from her school friend, Lisa Löhring, that she should go and stay at Cologne, and make the acquaintance of Lisa's bridegroom. I thought very likely the Löhrings wanted her to help sew at the bride's things, but I was glad she should go, for it was dull at home, and one wedding makes many. When I said that to her father he was angry and said: 'Max Löhring was quartered at Deütz, and that one lieutenant in the family was enough for him' (it was Ernst Crämer's fine blue jacket that Friedel lost her heart to, the puss!). But I made him hold his tongue and say none of this nonsense before Hänchen, and in the end he gave her a hundred-mark bank note and put her into the Ladies Coupé himself.

"Now what happened on this visit I did not learn all at once, but I have put it together from different things that I have gathered from different people, and it all goes to prove what I have always held true: if a girl is ordained to marry, the right man will find her, even if he comes down the chimney.

"The Löhrlings came to meet her at Cologne station, Max and Lisa, and they had brought a carriage to drive her and her box home. 'Now, Max, off with you,' said Lisa; 'and don't let us see you again till nine o'clock; Hänchen and I have a great deal to talk about, and she will be tired with her long journey and will not care about seeing strangers, so keep him away till then.'

"'Is it your Bräutigam?' asked Hänchen; 'pray do not send him away on my account.'

"'Oh, no,' Lisa explained as they drove along; 'it is a friend of Max's, a Herr von Passau, who telegraphed this morning that he would come to-night and stay for a few days. He has inherited a property in North Germany and he is on his road to see it. I believe he stops here to see if Max can get leave to accompany him. But we do not want him with us your first evening, so I told Max to take him to a restaurant and give him supper, and later he can bring him. I want you all to myself.'

"What a talk the girls had—about Albrecht, Lisa's Bräutigam, and all the work there was to be done. When the gentlemen came in and Max introduced his friend von Passau to his mother and sister and their guest, they could not believe that it was already nine o'clock.

"'Well, no, it isn't,' confessed Max, 'but it is full moon and such a warm night, and there is music playing in the Flora Garten; Von Passau and I thought we would fetch you to drink a glass of beer there. You must excuse us that it is only eight o'clock, but we could not live any longer without you.'

"Of course the girls were delighted, Frau Löhrling put on her bonnet and took them all to the Flora.

"Max walked with his mother and the lady-guest, and Lisa with her brother's friend, and talked to him about his new property; and she thought he seemed a dull fellow, for when she asked him if he meant to live on his new property, he blushed and stammered, and said he could not decide for a few days. By-and-bye, in the gardens, as they sat at supper—for the ladies were persuaded to try some ham and some little brödcchen with their glasses of beer—they touched glasses altogether, and Lisa said joking, 'Herr von Passau you must touch with Fräulein Hellmuth, for you know the friends of our friends are our friends,' and so they bowed and touched glasses together, too.

"As von Passau and Max walked home that night the stranger suddenly asked: 'Do you interest yourself for that young lady, Max?'

"'I? Who? What young lady?' cried Max astonished.

"'Fräulein—ah—Hellmuth.'

"'Not I,' quoth Max. 'She is my sister's friend, but I hardly know her; her sister Friedel, I remember, was a jolly girl, but this one I scarcely have spoken to any more than yourself.'

"'That is well,' said von Passau; 'then I shall not do you any

wrong if I offer for her. I should like her beyond anything for my wife.'

"Max could only think his friend had gone mad. Now I must stop here," said the Frau Doktor, "to repeat again that my Hänchen was no beauty. She was medium height and rather plump, as a German girl should be; she had blue eyes and light-brown hair which she wore in one thick plait, put round the top of her head like a crown. She had bought a pretty blue foulard costume with her father's present, and had had her good handsome dress of green tartan, English stuff, all done up with new velvet, and a new Tuscan straw hat, with bunches of lilies of the valley, went with both, and suited her wonderfully well. She wore the English dress that evening, for it was a little chilly sitting out, and next day, when they all went to Düsseldorf by the steamboat, she wore the blue. Now on the way as they went, Herr von Passau announced that he had just received a letter from his lawyer, and he must go North to his property at once, and he thought perhaps it would be as well to start that evening from Düsseldorf, as time pressed. 'I cannot persuade Max to go with me, Gnädige Frau,' said he, 'so I must go by myself, a lonely bachelor,' and he sighed deeply.

"'You must find a wife soon, Herr von Passau,' said Frau Löhrling. You see she could speak easily, for Lisa was busy.

"'I have seen one,' he answered, 'but she does not know it,' which made everyone laugh.

"In spite of the lawyer's letter, von Passau did not travel North that night. He kept putting off, and putting off while they rambled about the town, saying each time that a later train would serve him quite well, till at last there was only the last one back to Cologne, and they all returned from their day's pleasuring together—von Passau taking it very quietly, and saying that he could start early next morning. When they got back to the Löhrling's house, there was Albrecht arrived, and they took a little supper. 'That friend of Max's is in love with your friend, Lischen,' whispered the Bräutigam, after half an hour.

"'Nonsense!' said Lischen, who could not think of anyone being in love but herself. 'He has not spoken ten words to her, and they only met yesterday evening,' for Max, fearing his friend should be laughed at, had told his sister nothing.

"'Nevertheless, he loves her; trust me. I am in love myself and know,' answered Albrecht.

"'Bah!' said Lisa, 'I tell you they have not spoken together for five minutes, and Hänchen is not so wonderfully beautiful! I will tell you what—suppose I go to the door and just listen for a minute,' for by this time the two guests had gone into the salon together, while Albrecht was helping Lisa to lock up after supper, and Frau Löhrling had gone upstairs.

"She crept quietly to the door, and listened—then she came back

shaking her head. 'You are too romantic, mein Herr,' said she, 'they are now for the first time alone together, and they are talking of the pickpockets in the Dom Kirche.'

"Nevertheless, Albrecht only shook his head.

"Next morning Herr von Passau really did start for the North. When Hänchen came to breakfast at eight o'clock, she heard that he called quite early, before anyone was up, and had left his cards, 'one for you, too, Hänchen,' said Frau Löhring, counting them out.

"When my girl came back from her visit," continued the Frau Doktor, taking a fresh skein of wool, and dexterously twitching it over her left arm, as she started on a fresh phase of her story and her knitting, "I thought I never had seen her looking so ill, and so unlike herself. 'Visiting does not suit her,' I said to myself, remembering how Friedel used to look like a fresh rose when she came back from her aunt at Wiesbaden, and what spirits even our quiet Heléne would be in after a visit to Wetzlar. Then I began to fear: 'has she a misplaced affection, an unfortunate attachment?' and I was quite miserable to think that perhaps while I had been praying the good God to give her earthly happiness, He had thought fit to visit her with such a trial as this. I did my best to discover from her what had happened during her visit to Cologne, but beyond a general idea of the Löhring family life, I learnt nothing—no mention of anyone in particular, no consciousness at mentioning Max's name, only a melancholy, an abstractedness that I could not account for. Her father said, 'She is spoilt with the gay town life,' but I said 'No, it can't be that,' for if she had been set up with town fancies, she would never have been so careless about her dress as to walk out one day with a black glove and a grey, and never notice it!

"It was love, I was sure, and an unfortunate love, I was afraid.

"One day, when she had been home about a month, my man came in, in a pretty taking, with a letter in his hand.

"'Look at this,' said he; 'here is a fellow that I have never heard of asking my consent to his marrying our Hänchen! Do you know anything about it?'

"'Not I. What is his name?'

"'Passau—von Passau, too—he says he met her at Löhrings.'

"'So—o. I have not heard her mention him. Has he spoken to her at all?'

"'He says not. It is a most extraordinary thing; let us call the girl and ask her.'

"Hänchen came in at that moment; she had been gardening and her hands were full of flowers while her face bore a strange, dreamy expression as if her mind was far away. Her father asked:

"'Hänchen, who is Herr Eduard von Passau?' without preamble.

"'There was a Herr von Passau, a friend of Max Löhring, who stayed for a few days in Cologne. I do not know if his name is Eduard.'

" 'You met him at the Löhrlings' ?' "

" 'Yes, father.' "

" 'Did you like him ?' "

" 'Why—yes, but I saw him only twice, and we scarcely spoke together at all.' "

" 'He has written to ask my consent to his paying you his addresses.' "

" 'His what ?' "

" 'His addresses—don't you know what that means ? He wants to marry you.' "

" 'Me !' and poor, modest Hänchen ran out of the room with her hands before her face.

" 'Had you no idea of this, Herzchen ?' I asked her later. 'We have thought you changed and melancholy since you came home, and I feared perhaps that you had seen somebody you felt you could love who did not return your preference—was it not so ?' "

" 'Indeed, no, mamachen,' answered Hänchen earnestly ; 'if I have seemed altered it was only because—oh, you will think me so silly if I tell you ——' and she hid her face behind my shoulder.

" 'Nay, then, why should I ?' "

" 'Because I had seen Lisa Löhrling with her Bräutigam and it looked so beautiful, so full of happiness to love and be loved like that ; and I thought, I am not pretty or clever, no one is ever likely to want to love me so. The feeling was strong upon me when I came home, and I struggled against it, for I knew I was discontented—but, oh mother, I did not guess you had seen it.' "

" 'A mother's eyes see most things,' said I, pressing her to me, 'and you did not guess either what was in store for you, eh, Hänchen ?' "

" 'But to that she made no answer.

" 'Two days later Hänchen and I stood at the window that looks down the road to the station ; my man had gone to Cologne to meet Herr von Passau, at his earnest request, and if papa liked the young man, and if he approved of his manners and appearance, he was to bring him home to spend the evening with us. I was more excited even than Hänchen. I had tried to get her to describe Herr von Passau that I might judge a little of the impression he would make on my husband, who is a very intelligent man, but beyond the fact that Max Löhrling's friend was a tall man, and dark, with a fine beard and an impressive manner, my daughter could not or would not say anything.

" 'Spectacles ?' I asked anxiously, as we stood looking out of the window. We had heard the train whistle five minutes before, and knew that they must be approaching, but thought there was just time to ask that, for spectacles make a man look so much more important.

" 'I don't know—nay, I think a double eye-glass,' said Hänchen. 'A—ah !' and she sat down suddenly, without another word.

"Her father had turned the corner alone.

"I did not dare look at Hänchen. I thought she would be better left alone for a little, so out I flew to my man, who was hanging up his paletot in the entry.

"*'Ach leider!'* said I. 'I see he won't do at all, and you have had your journey for nothing, my Karl. Well, it is a sad disappointment, but, thank God, we don't want to lose our girl for many a year yet, and rather than give her to anyone who is unsatisfactory and unworthy——'

"*'What are you talking about?'* answered Karl. 'He is a capital fellow, and I like him very much. He gave me an excellent dinner at Bettgers', and I told him to come on here by the next train. I thought you would be glad of a little time to prepare. Why, what in the world are you crying about? I thought I had done everything to please you.'

"Next day we arranged to go to Stoltzenfels. We could not drive, or all the neighbours would have guessed what was a-foot, and Herr von Passau had not yet spoken to Hänchen, or done more than watch her as she went about her household duties. So we decided to meet at the station, and the young man gave me his arm, while Hänchen and her father went to take the tickets. Now, thought I, he will say something to me (and there is nothing sweeter to a mother than to hear her daughter's praises—it is the finest flattery). But just then up came Herr Beck and his wife and sister, bound for Kreuznach, and in a moment I had my hand out from under his arm.

"*'Where are you going, liebe Frau Doktor?'* cried Frau Beck, so that all the station could hear, and I was so flustered that I answered, 'I don't know,' in an idiotic fashion, which, to anyone less absorbed in her own affairs, would have revealed the whole secret. Luckily, Frau Beck had a great deal to say.

"*'Go away, go away into another carriage,'* I managed to whisper to Herr von Passau, while our neighbours swept us along to the waiting-room. The others had come up with the tickets by this time, and, quickly comprehending the situation, my man announced that he had taken tickets for Stoltzenfels, where he was taking us for a little treat; and Herr von Passau, with ready tact, lifted his hat and strolled to the further end of the train.

"*'We shall just fill a carriage; how delightful!'* cried Frau Beck, for the twentieth time. 'We are going to Kreuznach, and your good company, so far, will be a great help on the way. Why should you not come on, and stop the night? It would do you all good, I am sure. Where is your friend, Frau Doktor, who was with you just now? You did not introduce him. I hope he did not want to travel in your society.'

"*'A mere new acquaintance,'* I stammered.

"*'That is all right, he had the good sense to leave old friends*

together. Hänchen, you are looking pale, my love ; you had better persuade the good mother to send you to Kreuznach to me, eh, don't you think so ?'

" 'I beg your pardon ?'

" 'You had better come with us ; it is such a gay place in the season, and Theresa, here, would be delighted to have a companion. Do you know it at all ?'

" Hänchen stared in bewilderment. I knew she had not been listening to a word, and I rushed to her help as I best might. 'Hänchen has only just come home from a visit to Cologne ; we cannot spare her to go to Kreuznach just now,' I said, with emphasis on the name that she might recover herself, and I kept up the ball of conversation as well as I could till we reached Stoltzenfels and had to alight.

" 'The best view of the castle is just at this point from the other end of the carriage ; Fräulein Theresa ought not to miss seeing it,' said my man, who can be as sharp as a needle when he chooses ; and having left all the Becks with their heads out of the opposite window, we slipped off the platform with Herr von Passau closely following. What a thing it is to have tact !

"In the evening, as we strolled down from the castle, the way grew narrow and dark under the thick boughs, and my man gave me his arm while Herr von Passau came behind with Hänchen beside him. They were close to us, and I looked back once and heard him telling her that as he came through Cologne he had read in the *Gazette* that the pickpockets that had so long infested the Dom Kirche had been captured and punished. Next time I turned to look, a wind in the path had hidden them from my sight. 'Come on, come on,' said my man, who was getting fidgety for his supper ; 'they are all right now.'

"And as we stood waiting for them on the balcony of the restaurant below, they came out of the wood arm-in-arm.

"That was love at first sight, was it not ?" concluded the Frau Doktor. "On Eduard's part without a doubt, for Max Löhrling told me afterwards of what he had said on that very first evening ; and on Hänchen's part, too, I believe, though the dear child was too modest and unassuming to know what the feeling was. It is a wonderful thing, this love : all-powerful, all-conquering, not to be gainsaid if——"

"Excuse me, Fräulein, one instant. I think I hear that soldier again in the kitchen with Trüdchen, and if so, there will not be a scrap of veal worth slicing for supper."

THE SMILE.

I AM a knight of the road ; in less euphonious language, a city bagman ; and having lately returned to town after a week's hard work by day and railway jolting by night, I found myself on the very evening of my return obliged to present myself at a city dinner.

My commercial travels have not as yet brought me fortune. The "costly hansom," much more wheels of my own, are still beyond me. Nevertheless "I am contented with my fate—an omnibus suffices me." It was accordingly in this humble but convenient vehicle that I ensconced myself wearily, and we proceeded to rumble city-wards.

It was a wettish night ; raw, and with a treacherous wind that shoved itself past the conductor, wound sinuously among the knees and skirts of the other passengers, and roamed coolly, coldly even, up the legs of my dress trousers. The wood pavements that hurried away in serpentine curves behind us gleamed like looking-glass, wherein shop-lights, street-lights, the red lamps of the retiring hansom dropped reflections, long and tremulous as those of stars in a river ; and the other reflections dropped by my left-hand neighbour, when the twelfth passenger got in and placed a large and muddy boot upon his tenderest corn, brought my mind back with a jump from poetical similes to the actual present. We were "full up," and the conductor signified the same by a postman's ring to his partner on the box.

We stopped, started again, jolted on and again stopped, after the manner of the ordinary omnibus ; and too tired to think, I studied languidly the appearance of my fellow travellers. There were the usual faces ; one gets to know omnibus occupants by heart. First, the fat lady, whom you never—fortunately—meet anywhere else ; for she breathes shortly, occupies the place of two, and as she gets in and out extends a short fin-like arm towards the hand-rail, and cuts you mercilessly in the face with the heavily jettied border of her mantle. She never apologises—by this mark you may know her.

Then there was the deprecating little gentleman, invariably placed by fate beside the fat lady, who thoroughly obscures his view, whose voluminous draperies suffocate him, who scarcely dares to occupy any place at all, yet is always expected by both hand neighbours to occupy still less.

There was, of course, the hungry-looking girl with the fiddle case. Violin fever has broken out strongly among feminine London these last few years ; every girl nowadays shows her individualism (?) by carrying a fiddle-case. But is it possible that musical talent is thus developing in leaps and bounds ? I am tempted to believe, not all those cases contain their legitimate inmates ; were locks to be forced,

some seventy-five per cent. would be found in use as æsthetic market-baskets, revealing butter, cheese, and ribbon ends instead of the imitation Amati or the spurious Strad.

There was also close beside me my familiar old acquaintance, the Major, who suffers no encroachment on his hired territory; he sits with knees wide apart, elbows squared, and hands resting on stick-top; he scowls defiance from under bushy brows, and refuses, by a mulish stolidity, to help in the transfer of coppers or change.

Finally there was the elderly female of heavy build burdened with the inevitable newspaper parcel; who always precipitates herself head foremost into the vehicle, lays a fat, moist hand on any part of your person that comes first, and seldom achieves a seat without crushing some innocent foot to a jelly. It was the Major's foot she had crushed this time, and if that member was "innocent," certainly his language was not. The "shameful words" that issued from his mouth would have made the dear old *Thunderer* sick with horror.

All these good people were, as I said above, types familiar to me, and the dull, oppressive atmosphere engendered by their damp raiment and intermingling breath would have assuredly sent me napping, but that my eyes fell lastly on the occupant of the corner seat opposite: a girl, and an attractive one.

There are some faces that please by what they show us, others by what they promise. Hers belonged to the latter class, the charm of which, I need hardly observe, is infinitely the greater. This girl had pretty eyes, a nice little nose and mouth, clear complexion, abundant hair. Many girls have as much. She also displayed, when she turned her head, an exquisite cheek-line. This is extremely rare. But her unique fascination lay deeper than this. It was comprised in the latent potentialities of her smile. I saw that she had the gift of giving such a smile as would change the blackest world to a heaven of light.

Don't scoff! I am a connoisseur in smiles. I have collected them, compared them, tabulated them for years, and a decade's assiduity has not enriched my cabinet with half-a-dozen perfect specimens. Grins, smirks, vapid simperings, I have in plenty; they stand bottled in spirits of wine on the monstrosity shelf; but of the true smile with its heavenly blending of lines, melting of colours, its warmth, radiance, sincerity, I have just four or five examples, and no more.

And here, suddenly, when thinking least about it, here in an omnibus, was made known to me the presence of the Koh-i-noor of smiles, hidden only by the thinnest of veils. I don't refer to the transparent material of criss-cross lines with the two black velvet spots drawn across the maiden's face, but to the thin veil of decorum that held that lovely smile at bay. I could see it would be lovely. I can read mouths in repose. I have smiled experimentally at so many, and I am forced to confess with the worst possible results.

For we are not a smiling nation ; smiles don't come naturally to us. If you doubt me, experiment for yourself on the next dozen children you meet in the street. Eight will return the amenity with every species of infantile scowl, three will burst into tears and clamour for their nurses ; you are lucky if *one* proves timidly responsive. While as for older people, these so persistently misread their Shakespeare to the effect "a man who smiles and smiles *must* be a villain," that they meet any such friendly overture with the most frozen contempt.

But leaning back in my corner and gazing dreamily at the possessor of the latent smile, I felt sure that such entrancing lines of mouth and chin could never express aught but suavity. What an upward curve at the corners ! made for smiling ; what a dear depression in the under lip ! I closed my eyes ; I recalled the recent utterance of one of our writers, who teaches us art, manners and morality in the monthly magazines, on the perils of addressing a girl in an omnibus ; I asked myself would this apply equally to smiling ? Then I opened my eyes again, encountered those of my vis-a-vis, and, after an instant's pause—she smiled.

How did it come about that three minutes later we were talking like old friends ? It was the smile that did it. For it revealed to me not only two soul-subduing dimples, curves of an even unanticipated beauty, and teeth white and sound as the heart of a hazel-nut split in two (Emerson has taught me to trust a woman who shows, in smiling, white and even teeth) ; but it told me also of wit and cordiality, sweetness and sense, and all the thousand gifts that nature gives to her best-loved daughters.

The smile informed me that here was the not impossible She whom I had sought so long and so eagerly in suburban drawing-rooms and at subscription dances in country towns and bar-parlours, and fashionable assembly-rooms, yea ! even in the columns of the matrimonial papers—and let me add, hitherto in vain.

I said all this to the smile, and more, and she confided to me many bewilderingly delightful things in return. I swore adherence to the Platonic theory that every human being is but the divided half of some single soul, and thus can never attain completeness until he meets his other self. I had met mine now, and I told this to the smile too.

The elderly female took umbrage. She raised herself up by a steadying grip on my knee, and tottered off to the virtuous vicinity of the conductor and the oil-lamp.

The maiden and I were alone at our end of the omnibus, and in darkness but for the illuminating smile, which guided me safely through the most difficult conversational mazes, and shed its glory on my feeblest quirks and epigrams. It did more ; it penetrated to the recesses of my soul, and lighted up all those fine thoughts and feelings I inwardly delight in, but never can render into adequate speech.

The smile and I were now passionately in love with each other, and over our journey was shed the glory and the glamour of a dream.

Like a dream, too, was the ever-increasing discomfort of the omnibus.

It was jolting more and more, as it does when emptying of its human ballast. It suddenly stopped with a jerk that pitched me half off the seat.

"Are you goin' to stay there all night?" said a voice. I opened my eyes. The vehicle was empty. The lamp over the doorway shone only on the worn and flattened velvet seats, on the conductor's spleenful face.

"Put me down at the Mansion House," I said urbanely.

"You passed it an hour ago," retorted he.

"Where are we now then?"

"This 'ere is the Mile End Road, an' that there is the Angel Arms, an' if you didn't fall asleep when you didn't houghter, you wouldn't need to be askin' no question like a two-year-old child."

Evidently a pirate omnibus. No servant of the Company's would have demeaned himself to such language.

But had I really been asleep? Where was the smile? Where the maiden? Did she ever really smile at all? Or had I fallen a prey to my dominant idea, and dozed off while studying the lines of her delightful mouth?

Anyhow, I had missed my city dinner. Yet what matter? "Are forty wagging beards worth one girl's smile?"

No, a thousand times no; and even though you tell me it was purely fancy-bred, it had given me, for all that, a delight "more deep and delicate" than many a solid half-quartern loaf of grim reality.

GILBERT H. PAGE.



LIFE'S SEASONS.

SWEETHEART, sweetheart, summer is coming,

What will it bring to you and to me?

Dreams more tender than morning's blush,

Gayer songs than the speckled thrush

Trills to his mate from the cherry tree

With heart as light as a feather.

A sea of sapphire, a heaven of blue,

A life like a fairy tale come true,

A wonderful world wherein we two

Shall wander away together.

Sweetheart, sweetheart, autumn is coming,

What will it bring to you and to me?

Golden corn from the seedling sprung,

Fruit that hangs where the blossom hung,

Luscious spoil of the honey bee,

So hard at work o'er the heather.

And better than wealth of the fertile weald,

The treasure that faithful love shall yield

When we in the world's wide harvest field

Are binding our sheaves together.

Sweetheart, sweetheart, winter is coming,

What will it bring to you and to me?

Twilight grey for the glow of youth,

Stern decay with his scorn of ruth,

While nature sleeps, from her labour free,

And life has scantier tether.

But if I yet in your eyes may look,

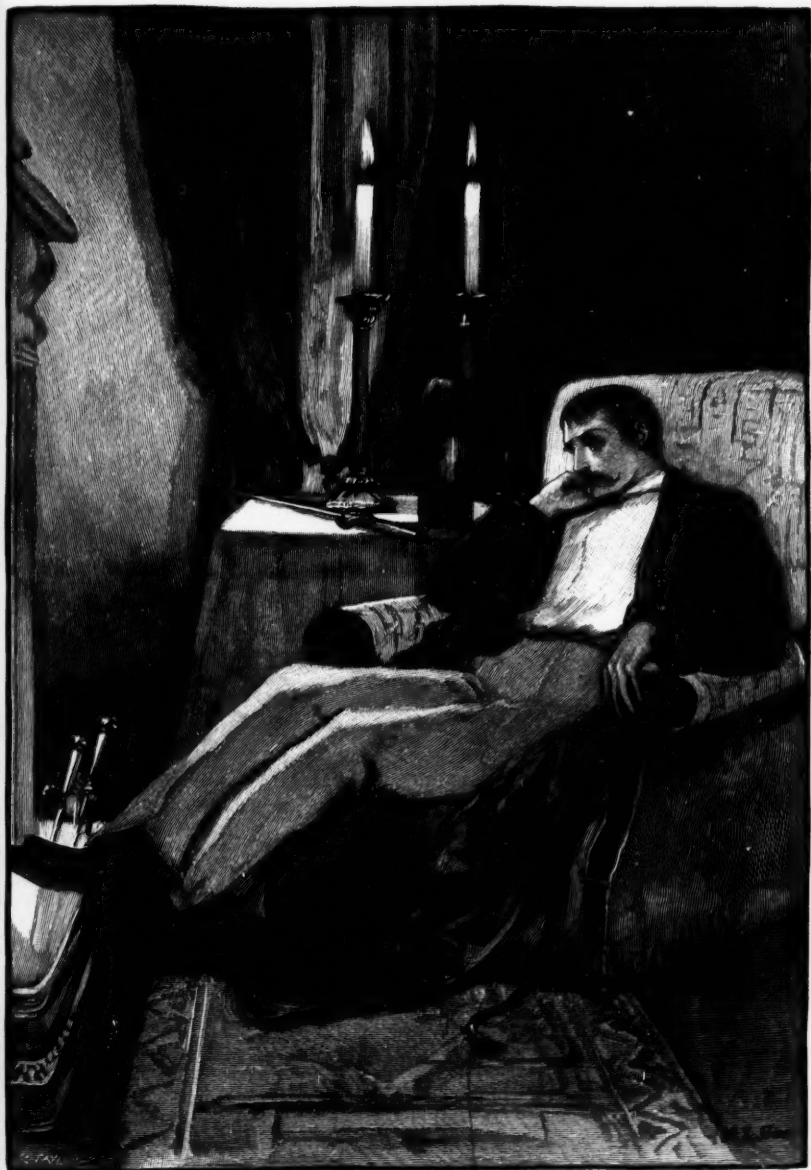
What matter the sunny paths we took?

Nay, pleasanter now the ingle nook,

And rest that is ours together.

SYDNEY GREY.





M. L. GOW.

R. TAYLOR.

HAUNTED

NOTICE.

The next (DECEMBER) Number of **THE ARGOSY** will, as usual, be the **Extra Christmas Number** of the Magazine. It will contain a **Complete Christmas Story** by the late **MRS. HENRY WOOD**, Author of "**East Lynne**," and many other Complete Stories and Illustrations.

Price ONE SHILLING.

The JANUARY Number of **THE ARGOSY** will contain the First Part of a Story by **MRS. HENRY WOOD**, which will go through many months; the Opening Chapters of a **Serial Story of Dramatic and Domestic Interest**, and various other Stories and Illustrations.

SIXPENCE MONTHLY.

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